

JUDAISM

A LAYMAN'S SEARCH FOR UNDERSTANDING

Irene Kaminka Fischer

THE PROPHET JONAH: TWO VIEWS

Chaim Lewis

Abraham Cohen

JEWISH CULTURE AND RELIGION IN RUSSIA

Aryeh Y. Yodfat

Chone Shmeruk

LAUGHTER IN BIBLICAL AND RABBINIC LITERATURE

Chaim W. Reines

SUE No. 82 / VOLUME 21 / NUMBER 2 / \$2.25

SPRING 1972

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STATEMENT OF SPONSORSHIP

The American Jewish Congress is sponsoring the publication of JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF JEWISH LIFE AND THOUGHT as part of its basic policy "to stimulate an informed awareness of Jewish affairs, encourage Jewish scholarship and adequate opportunities for Jewish education, and generally foster the affirmation of Jewish religious, cultural, and historic identity."

JUDAISM, conceived as a free and non-partisan organ, is dedicated to the creative discussion and exposition of the religious, moral and philosophical concepts of Judaism and their relevance to the problems of modern society. Through an exploration of the meaning and needs of the Jewish experience, it hopes to widen the channels of communication between Jews and to affirm Jewish verity and vitality to the world at large.

The Board of Editors, composed of distinguished scholars and thinkers drawn from every segment of Jewish life, is vested with full authority and responsibility for the contents of this Journal. Views and opinions expressed in the articles and reviews are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the position of the American Jewish Congress, which is sponsoring the publication of this Journal as a service to the American Jewish community and to all who seek to understand the nature of the Jewish tradition and its modern significance.

American Jewish Congress

JUDAISM: A QUARTERLY JOURNAL is published by the American Jewish Congress. It appears in January, April, July, and October. Office of Publication: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Re-entered as second-class matter at Post Office, New York City, N.Y. Subscription in the United States and Canada, \$8.00 for one year, \$14.00 for two years, \$19.00 for three years; foreign subscription, \$9.00. Special rate for bulk (10 or more) and student subscriptions, \$5.00. Single issue, \$2.25; single issue abroad, \$2.50. Make checks payable to the order of JUDAISM, and send to: 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. A month's notice must be given of any change of address.

The Board of Editors invites articles, communications, comments and discussion for publication. Address: Editors, JUDAISM, 15 East 84th Street, New York, N.Y. 10028. Copyright © 1972 by the American Jewish Congress.

JUDAISM

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL

Issue 82 / Volume 21 / Number 2 / Spring 1972

<i>The First Reader</i>		131
<i>A Layman's Search for Understanding</i>	IRENE KAMINKA FISCHER	134
<i>A Comprehensive Jewish Policy for the 70's</i>	TSVI BISK	151
THE PROPHET JONAH: TWO VIEWS		
<i>Jonah—A Parable for Our Time</i>	CHAIM LEWIS	159
<i>The Tragedy of Jonah</i>	ABRAHAM COHEN	164
<i>Laughter in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature</i>	CHAIM W. REINES	176
JEWISH CULTURE AND RELIGION IN RUSSIA		
<i>Rabbis and Clergymen in the USSR</i>	ARYEH Y. YODFAT	184
<i>The Destruction of a Literature</i>	CHONE SHMERUK	195
<i>Revelation and Zimzum</i>	DAVID WEISS-HALIVNI	205
<i>Man's Choice and God's Design</i>	HERSHEL J. MATT	211
<i>On the Evitable of War</i>	MAX BROD and HUGO BERGMAN	222

REVIEWS

<i>Review-Essay: Four Recent Studies of Jesus the Jew</i>		
<i>The Trial and Death of Jesus</i>		
by Haim Cohn		
<i>Jesus and Israel</i>		
by Jules Isaac		
<i>The Execution of Jesus: a Judicial, Literary and Historical Investigation</i>		
by William Riley Wilson		
<i>Was Jesus Married?</i>		
by William E. Phipps	MORTON S. ENSLIN	230
<i>Index to Festschriften in Jewish Studies</i>		
compiled and edited by		
Charles Berlin	ROBERT GORDIS	237
<i>The Jewish Year in Art and Anthology—A Survey</i>		
	RACHEL WISCHNITZER	239
<i>The Structure of Jewish History: A Radical New Interpretation,</i>		
by Ellis Rivkin	MARC LEE RAPHAEL	242
<i>The Bene Israel of Bombay—A Study of a Jewish Community</i>		
by Schifra Strizower	EZEKIEL N. MUSLEAH	244
<i>The Tenants</i>		
by Bernard Malamud	FOSTER HIRSCH	247
<i>The Religion of Ethical Nationhood</i>		
by Mordecai M. Kaplan	WILLIAM E. KAUFMAN	249
<i>The New Left and the Jews</i>		
ed. Mordecai Chertoff		
<i>The Bush is Burning! Radical Judaism</i>		
<i>Faces the Pharaohs of the Modern Superstate</i>		
by Arthur I. Waskow	BILL NOVAK	251

COMMUNICATIONS

from George P. Graham and A. Roy Eckardt

Editor

ROBERT GORDIS

Managing Editor

RUTH B. WAXMAN

Contributing Editors

JACOB B. AGUS, Baltimore, Md. • SELIG ADLER, Buffalo, N.Y. • ALEXANDER ALTMANN, Waltham, Mass. • MAX ARZT, New York, N.Y. • SALO W. BARON, New York, N.Y. • MEIR BEN-HORIN, Philadelphia, Pa. • HUGO BERGMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • BEN ZION BOKSER, New York, N.Y. • EUGENE B. BOROWITZ, New York, N.Y. • WILLIAM G. BRAUDE, Providence, R.I. • ARTHUR A. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • GERSON D. COHEN, New York, N.Y. • EMIL L. FACKENHEIM, Toronto, Canada • DAVID FLUSSER, Jerusalem, Israel • MARVIN FOX, Columbus, O. • SOLOMON B. FREEHOF, Pittsburgh, Pa. • MAURICE FRIEDMAN, Philadelphia, Pa. • THEODORE FRIEDMAN, Jerusalem, Israel • NAHUM N. GLATZER, Waltham, Mass. • JUDAH GOLDIN, New Haven, Conn. • ISRAEL GOLDSTEIN, Jerusalem, Israel • MAX GRUENEWALD, Millburn, N.J. • MENAHEM HARAN, Jerusalem, Israel • WILL HERBERG, Madison, N.J. • ABRAHAM J. HESCHEL, New York, N.Y. • ARTHUR HYMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERICH ISAAC, Irvington, N.Y. • MAX KADUSHIN, New York, N.Y. • HORACE M. KALLEN, New York, N.Y. • MORDECAI M. KAPLAN, New York, N.Y. • MILTON R. KONVITZ, Ithaca, N.Y. • ARTHUR J. LELYVELD, Cleveland, Ohio • SOL LIPTZIN, Jerusalem, Israel • LEVI A. OLAN, Dallas, Texas • HARRY M. ORLINSKY, New York, N.Y. • JAKOB PETUCHOWSKI, Cincinnati, O. • LEO PFEFFER, New York, N.Y. • JOACHIM PRINZ, Newark, N.J. • EMANUEL RACKMAN, New York, N.Y. • NATHAN ROTENSTREICH, Jerusalem, Israel • MAURICE SAMUEL, New York, N.Y. • ZALMAN M. SCHACHTER, Winnipeg, Canada • DAVID S. SHAPIRO, Milwaukee, Wis. • DAVID WOLF SILVERMAN, New York, N.Y. • ERNST SIMON, Jerusalem, Israel • AARON STEINBERG, London, England • SHEMARYAHU TALMON, Jerusalem, Israel • SINAI UCKO, Herzliyah, Israel • DAVID WEISS, New York, N.Y. • PAUL WEISS, New Haven, Conn. • TRUDE WEISS-ROSMARIN, New York, N.Y. • HARRY A. WOLFSON, Cambridge, Mass. • MICHAEL WYSCHOGROD, New York, N.Y.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In increasing measure, modern men are turning again to the quest for a world-view on the issues that are timeless—the meaning of life, the challenge of death, the purpose of suffering, the significance of the individual, his relation to society, and the goal of history. In order to advance this enterprise of spiritual discovery of our time this Journal has been projected. It will be primarily concerned with the philosophy, ethics, and religion of Judaism as a factor in the contemporary world . . .

We are committed to the proposition that Judaism has positive value today for Jews and for the world . . . At the same time, we disassociate ourselves from the dangerous tendency toward the hardening of party lines on the contemporary Jewish scene . . . The members of the Board of Editors belong to every school of Jewish life or to none. The trends popularly referred to as Orthodox, Conservatism, Reform, Reconstructionism, as well as others that as yet have no specific names, have their advocates among us, though no institution or movement is officially represented . . . Undoubtedly, our differences will find expression in these pages, but we shall be at one in opposing the dogmatism which takes for granted that one's own particular standpoint has a monopoly on truth and the authoritarianism which would suppress any contrary point of view.

Judaism will be dedicated to the quest for truth in the spirit of freedom. Our columns will be open to anyone who has something significant to say and the ability to say it well. New and unconventional interpretations, whatever their standpoint, will be welcomed from every source, for we share the conviction of the Talmud that "Both these and the others are the words of the living God."—*From the introductory article by Robert Gordis, "Toward a Renaissance of Judaism" in Vol. I, No. 1.*

The First Reader

THE MILLENNIAL HISTORY OF JUDAISM HAS BEEN the record of the constant effort to maintain the integrity of the tradition by reinterpreting it in the idiom and in accordance with the needs and insights of each generation. By definition, the task is, therefore, unending and indispensable.

In her thoughtful paper "A Layman's Search for Understanding," *Dr. Irene Fischer*, herself the daughter of a distinguished scholar, *Dr. Aharon Kaminka*, presents guidelines for utilizing traditional concepts of God and man in grappling with the concerns of the contemporary age.

American Jews have not been loath to express their views with regard to the major problems confronting the State of Israel. This is as it should be, because the relationship of American Jewry to Israel is not one of philanthropy but of brotherhood. As an American settled in Israel, *Mr. Tsvi Bisk* is in a special position to present a trenchant criticism of Jewish life in America. His paper, "A Comprehensive Jewish Policy for the 70's" is likely to evoke wide differences of opinion among readers.

In his paper "Jonah—A Parable for Our Time," *Chaim Lewis* presents an arresting interpretation and appreciation of the book of Jonah on the level of parable. As the author recognizes, there cannot be a single symbolic interpretation of a work of literature—nor need there be. Neither is such an approach susceptible to argument or refutation—it is a vision of life to be assayed on its own terms. One demurrer should be registered. In his zeal for Jonah, the author, we believe, fails to do justice to the greatness of Job either in substance or in form. The paper is one more illustration of the incredible depth of meaning to be found in the Bible, when read with insight and empathy.

Radically different in temper and approach from Chaim Lewis' symbolic and largely subjective interpretation of Jonah, is the paper by *Abraham Cohen* on the same Biblical book, entitled "The Tragedy of Jonah." Mr. Cohen presents a closely reasoned analytic critique of the views of several contemporary scholars and then proceeds to offer his own interesting interpretation of the meaning of this small Biblical masterpiece.

One frequently encounters the assertion that there is no humor in the Bible and the Talmud. In view of the well-known capacity for wit

and humor characteristic of the modern Jew, the thesis is questionable. In his paper, "Laughter in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature," *Dr. Chaim W. Reines* illumines several aspects of this interesting subject.

At a recent hearing before a Congressional Committee in Washington, a spokesman for the United States State Department sought to soften the impact of mounting protests against the persecution of Judaism in Russia. His astounding "explanation" was that though the Soviet Union prides itself on being a federation of many free nationalities, Jews are "more alien" than any other ethnic group in the Communist orbit. The style, though not the substance, of this statement recalls George Orwell's famous epigram that all men are equal, but some are more equal than others.

In his paper, "Rabbis and Clergymen in the USSR," *Dr. Aryeh Y. Yodfat* examines another aspect of the sorry record of Soviet persecution of Judaism and of those Soviet Jews who retain a sense of allegiance to their heritage. Dr. Yodfat arrives at rather pessimistic conclusions with regard to the possibility of salvaging significant elements of Jewish life from Soviet Russia. There have been some positive developments in the recent past, notably the increased flow of Russian Jews to Israel. However, the gyrations of Soviet policy are so unpredictable that one cannot tell whether these developments represent a permanent change for the better. One can only remain vigilant—and moderately hopeful.

Some sensational incidents during the recent past have highlighted the tragic position of the Jewish religion in the Soviet Union. The death of Rabbi Levin in Moscow, however his role is evaluated, is an additional setback to hopes for a more even-handed treatment of Judaism in the Soviet Union. In spite of such incidents, including the detention and expulsion of Congressman James Scheuer, it is possible that long term prospects for Jewish religion and culture in Russia may be better than they have been earlier. Whether it is merely that the wish is father to the thought only time can tell.

Apologists for the special mistreatment of Russian Jews in the Soviet Union have fallen back upon the convenient explanation that it is "religion" in general which is out of favor, with Judaism only one item in this category. Since this alibi does not "explain" all the facts, it is added that Zionism is not merely tainted with religious values, but is a form of capitalist imperialism. Finally, the proscription of the Hebrew language and literature is justified on the ground of its close identification with the Jewish religion.

The total lack of cogency in this long chain of weak arguments is clear. *Professor Chone Shmeruk*, in "The Destruction of a Literature," which has been translated by Professor Herbert Paper, presents a

deeply disturbing account of the brief upsurge of creativity in Yiddish poetry in the Soviet Union, followed by the brutal suppression of the movement through the imprisonment and execution of its leading figures. The essay originally appeared as an introduction to an anthology of Soviet-Jewish poets, published in Israel.

The problem of reconciling a religious faith in revelation with a scientific approach to historical criticism is illumined in a paper by *Dr. David Weiss-Halivni*. In "Revelation and Zimzum" he suggests that the Cabbalistic doctrine of "the contraction of God" may serve as an analogue for understanding the critical method of historical research and, therefore, incorporating it into the outlook of the orthodox believer.

The perennial problem of God's providence and man's freedom is a paradox not merely for the religious believer. The secularist, as well, must grapple with the philosophic dilemma of freedom versus necessity. The issue is discussed in religious terms by *Rabbi Hershel J. Matt* in his paper, "Man's Choice and God's Design," which is a significant contribution to an issue which will always be with us.

We are indebted to *Professor Hugo Bergman*, a member of our Board of Contributing Editors, for the interchange of letters between himself and the German-Jewish novelist, Max Brod, fifty years ago. The questions of nationalism, war, and peace, which they discussed seem to belong to the "perennial issues," where we never have too much illumination. The letters were translated for us by Professor William Kluback.

R. G.

A Layman's Search for Understanding:

The Message of Judaism in Modern Terms

IRENE KAMINKA FISCHER

"When your son asks you some day: What is the meaning of the testimonies, laws and judgments. . ." (Deut. 6:20)

MANY ESSAYS, LECTURES AND DISCUSSIONS TODAY deal with the relevance of religion, religion versus science, the Six Millions, God is dead, the post-religious era, etc., which, by their very frequency, reflect the dual face of our time: outwardly, a secular negativism, and, inwardly, a search for values. The current disrepute of institutional religion and of religious language tends to throw out the old-fashioned together with the valuable. In addition, Jews raised in a non-Jewish culture often see their own tradition through non-Jewish eyes and then search for relevancy elsewhere. What, therefore, can a modern Jewish intellectual, steeped in the more or less universal, secular civilization of our time, see in Judaism that would be relevant to him spiritually and that is something besides the right to physical survival in Israel and elsewhere?

I. Awareness of Different Meanings

All of us have wondered, at one time or other, about some of the "Eternal Questions" such as: How did this world come about and what is going to happen? Why is there good and evil? How do I cope with personal tragedy, and what do I want to do with my life?

While these questions might be characterized as pertaining to physical science, ethics, and psychology respectively, they actually express an intensely personal quest for guidance. They are not of an objective, scientific nature, although the wording may give that misleading impression. Thus, Galilei's troubles with the Church came about because he was talking science while the Church was talking religious motivation for governing the conduct of the uneducated masses.

The well-known pitfalls of verbal communication, due to different connotations in the minds of speakers and listeners, make it desirable to have some criterion by which to distinguish between sentences that refer to objective, verifiable statements on the one hand, and to metaphysical assumptions, religious experiences, figures of speech, basic attitudes toward life, emotions, and commitments on the other. Logical positivism

IRENE KAMINKA FISCHER is a well-known geodesist who has published numerous technical papers on earth measurements.

provides such a criterion of factual content by considering what kind of procedure would prove the statement correct or incorrect. For example, the scientific statement: "The radius of the earth is $6,378,150 \pm 20$ meters, that is 238 meters less than it was thought before," talks about the size of the earth in a very different way than Isaiah's words, "The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool" (66:1). The first sentence can be rephrased in the following form to verify it as correct or not: "If the new number, rather than the old one, is used in a computation of the distance between two points on the earth, the result will be more accurate; that is, it will agree more closely with some other independent measurement, say, by satellite, or by putting a tape measure on the ground." Isaiah's sentence has no scientific content according to this criterion, because there is no method for its verification. But it does have a message, and a very strong one, for those who are attuned to listen. In Isaiah's context God reprimands us for mistaking mindless routine motions of sacrificial ritual for His Commandments, and the magnificent poetic vision is meant to lift our eyes to the majesty of the Eternal and, thereby, raise our spiritual attitude to a higher level. Even a modern atheist can get the essential part of the message—if he wants to—by translating the language of God, ritual, and Commandments into secular language applied to contemporary issues, for instance, self-righteous prejudice as opposed to a sincerely ethical approach in issues of racism. The message is not a factual statement that can be proved or disproved, but an *expression of an attitude*. Its relevance depends on the person—whether he cares to interpret it in terms of his own contemporary language, and whether he lets it become relevant.

Science versus Bible.—The apparent contradiction between scientific discovery and the teaching of the Jewish Bible seems to me a confusion of the meaning of sentences, as discussed above. One of the major examples usually brought forth is the story of creation. As Sarna points out,¹ the story in Genesis must be appreciated, not by comparison with a modern textbook on geology, but, in its historical setting, by comparison with other ancient cosmologies, as for instance the Babylonian epic "Enuma Elish." Then, by contrast with the other lengthy tales about humanized, self-centered deities and magic forces, its magnificent lapidary brevity stands out in its purity of thought and guidance in *attitude*. Here we find the great concepts of One world, the kinship of all living, the brotherhood of man, the significance of Light—one might say, physical as well as spiritual light—, and the importance of a periodic day set aside for spiritual self-renewal. (The social implication of a day of rest for the subordinate workers is spelled out later.) A description of the deity is conspicuously absent, and the narrative hurries quickly on to the affairs of mankind.

1. Nahum M. Sarna, *Understanding Genesis* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966).

From this viewpoint a controversy about the length of the six days of creation becomes a point of semantics. Even the philosophical problem of *creatio ex nihilo* loses its significance; for how would one devise a method of verification? The Bible itself is honestly vague on this undecidable point which is subordinate to its purpose of shaping a high level of man's attitude toward life.

That an undecidable proposition about physical nature is irrelevant to the moral preoccupation of Jewish thinking is illuminated by a midrash: The text of the Torah begins with *Beit*, the second (and not the first) letter of the Hebrew alphabet, signifying the start of a second chapter, because what comes before—the content of the first chapter—was not meant for man to know; man's interest should, instead, concentrate on life's business as it unfolds in history; and the symbol for this admonition is the shape of the *Beit*: open towards the narrative, and closed in back (*Hagigah* 13a).

This does not mean to say that there are no hard facts in the Bible. There are even more than we knew a little while ago. Recent archaeology has discovered the factual background of many passages, for instance the identification of Biblical places and personages with historical places and tribes, or the real meaning of some narratives as embedded in the customs of their cultural environment. Thus, we understand only now why Rachel took the idols of her father's home: their possession constituted the legal evidence required in Hurrian (Horite) inheritance laws, of being her father's legitimate heir. Such findings are related to history, specifically the history of the Jewish people, and not to metaphysics.

Our sages have always encouraged us to look for a deeper meaning in cases of apparently contradictory sentences. This is the traditional way of saying that the meaning of a sentence is not always a statement of fact even if it sounds like one, but it could be something else, such as a moral message. In an age favoring philosophical language, Saadia, in the 9th century, spelled this out by listing the cases where allegorical interpretation of a Bible sentence is indicated: when its apparent meaning contradicts (a) facts of nature, (b) reason, (c) other Biblical sentences. An intellectual surrender such as "*Credo, quia absurdum est*" is quite un-Jewish.

Some Other Meanings.—A habit of testing the meaning of a sentence against a procedure of its verification does not imply that all sentences which do not meet this criterion of a verifiable statement are rejected as nonsense. It merely helps us to separate one possible meaning from others. It even helps us to recognize metaphysical assertions by ascertaining whether a procedure of verification would have to lead us into a metaphysical world or whether it could be seen in experiences of this world. For example, the Exodus story tells us that the Lord led us out of Egypt "with a strong hand and an outstretched arm." The verification obvi-

ously lies in the *deep feeling of awe* about this momentous historic happening, which is expressed in Biblical language in anthropomorphic terms. Today we are not confined to this language. We can distinguish between the poetic language expressing a profound experience of something that transcends individual capabilities, and a simplistic metaphysical interpretation asserting that a Being actually stood there with an outstretched arm. A verification of such an assertion, as distinct from the previous interpretation, would require a look into an extranatural world and a corporeal vision, which may lead to embellishing anthropomorphic details as found, for instance, in the Greek world of deities. Jewish teaching very strongly rejects corporeal images. God is heard out of a flaming thornbush, in the wind, but never seen. His word comes when guidance in human affairs is needed, not for the purpose of describing Himself in metaphysical details. If we refrain from picturing such details, both interpretations describe essentially the same religious experience.

Although this would seem to apply also to the experience of the Commandments at Mount Sinai, the orthodox fundamentalist view insists on a difference between the Word given by God Himself and the Word of divine inspiration experienced by Moses and the whole people, and accepts only the former. The phrasing in the liturgy, after the Torah reading, sounds like a compromise: "And this is the Torah which Moses put before the Children of Israel, by word of the Lord, by the hand of Moses."

The Commandments themselves are not subject to verification at all. They are not "true or false," but apodictive *directives* of how to live, and accepted, as such, in a *commitment*. "You shall not murder" is clear as a command. "You shall observe the Shabbat and keep it holy" is not sufficiently clear without further elaboration. The different formulations in Deut. 5:13-15, Ex. 31:12-17, 20:9-11 and Gen. 2:3 are sometimes quoted as contradictions, the one giving a social-ethical reason, so that your servants may rest, the other a memorial to the anthropomorphic story that God desisted from work on the seventh day which He then blessed. Both sound rather thin when taken literally as ultimate reasons. But they integrate as two sides of the same idea that there is a fundamental value for every person in taking time out to foster an experience of higher awareness. Samson Raphael Hirsch offers the interpretation that while man was permitted to rule over the world (for six days a week), he must not get the illusion that he is its ultimate master. Every seventh day, by refraining from any acts as master over people or over nature, he is to remind himself of who that ultimate Master of the Universe is.²

A remarkable example of a meaning different from the apparent

2. S. R. Hirsch, *Horeb* (London: Soncino Press, 1962), p. 63.

meaning of the words is the Mourners' Kaddish, where a directive how to cope with personal loss from death is buried in seemingly inappropriate phrases, yet sensed even by people who otherwise do not find anything meaningful in the Synagogue. One may wonder that a person in the hour of bereavement and rebellion should be called upon to recite the Kaddish, which is a praise of God in a linguistically impressive abundance of equivalent and exuberant phrases. An acceptable meaning, however, of the Mourners' Kaddish, as distinct from other uses of the Kaddish, emerges from its history.³ The Kaddish used to be the joyful closing ritual on finishing a period of Torah study, and still is that after concluding the various parts of the Synagogue services. When a learned man died, such study periods were held in his home and concluded customarily with the Kaddish. Later, the study was omitted, but the Kaddish remained. Still later, this custom was extended through the mourning year and to the anniversary *Yahrzeit*, and to *all* people. Services in the home during the *shivah* week replace the studying in providing the basis for the Kaddish recitation. Thus, when a mourner says Kaddish at services, it may be seen as a tribute, as if he were publicly proclaiming: "My father was a learned man in Israel, my mother was a wise woman in Israel," to which the congregation quasi responds: "Yes, they were." For the congregation, moreover, it is considered a privilege to respond in any Kaddish, as an opportunity to praise God in a revered ancient formulation. Thus, the attention of the mourner is gradually sublimated from the self-centered feeling of loss towards a positive contemplation and appreciation of the ennobling impact of the lives gone by, and towards some communication and affiliation with the living community, while facing the realities of life among "all the other mourners in Jerusalem."

II. *Translating Religious Wording into Modern Language*

Religious phrases which we heard as children in Sunday School have a way of becoming stereotyped, and their message may then lose its life. To revitalize that message on an adult level we might try to interpret its meaning within our own experiences. For example, the religiously worded story of Abraham's rejection of his society's idolatry, culminating in the Covenant, represents his early vision of values more real and lasting than those of his environment, and his dedication to them as his exclusive guiding principle. The Covenant has become the symbol of commitment to a moral world view and has inspired generation after generation.

The traumatic experience of the Exodus from Egypt has become the archetype of a rise from a life without meaning (as slaves) to a life in responsible freedom, socially as well as spiritually. The Exodus is followed—not by unlimited liberties, understandable though this would

3. E. Garfiel, *The Service of the Heart* (New York: Yoseloff, 1958).

have been after the escape from bondage—, but by the self-restrictive devotion of a whole people, including each individual throughout future generations (“as if you had been there yourself”) to a detailed moral code of conduct, of which the Decalogue is only the most quoted part. Characteristically, the Decalogue defines the Deity, not through metaphysical properties, but as a force in a people’s life; it echoes the earlier Covenant, and spells out basic do’s and don’ts for individual and social living.

The injunction of the third commandment against using the Holy Name falsely and lightly spells, in secular psychological terms, a warning that you cannot achieve integrity and self-respect if you betray your own ideals. And the admonition to be “a people of priests, a holy people” asks the commitment of each individual to personal dignity and integrity in whatever he does.

These are obvious translation-examples with relevant meaning. There are other interesting examples, like the concepts of “the world to come,” or faith, where different explanations reveal a difference in attitude towards life.

While the literal meaning of “the world to come” seems to refer to life after death, the Jewish attitude is characteristically undogmatic about the possibility and quality of such life (an undecidable metaphysical question), but is quite insistent about our obligations to work towards a better world here and now, towards the “world to come” as an earthly goal. And while the Messiah is supposed to initiate the world to come, a characteristic saying declares, “If someone announces to you that the Messiah is coming now while you are planting an olive tree, finish your planting first and only then go to greet the Messiah.” The statement expresses the realistic understanding that the Messiah is an ideal, guiding our efforts, and not a passively awaited event that would suddenly transform the world.

“Faith” does not have the same meaning in the Christian and the Jewish outlook. Christian faith centers around the belief in the divinity of Jesus and the power of that belief to lead to personal eternal life and salvation. Jewish faith is a trust that the good will triumph eventually, if we do our part. Accordingly, “The righteous lives by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4) is interpreted differently from these two viewpoints. Similarly, the verse “You shall keep My statutes and My ordinances, which if a man do, he shall live by them” (Lev. 18:5) is taken, in the one outlook, as a firm Scriptural promise of life after death; the Hebrew context, however, shows no connection with metaphysical immortality, but simply states that a man should abide by these laws. The Hebrew wording does not say “if,” and the new Bible translation of the Jewish Publication Society does not say so either.

Sentences Referring to God.—The word “God” is burdened with such

a variety of contradictory meanings and sentiments—ranging from the primitive to the philosophically abstract, from metaphysics to ethics, from bigotry to the sublime, from a reactionary force to an empty illusion, from an excuse to hate to an inspiration to love—as to make that word useless for ordinary communication. On the other hand, it is imbued with the whole world view of the authentic user as well as the critic, so that it becomes a source of insight within a specific context. In our context of translating the religious language of our Jewish heritage in search of relevance, we might consider the following approach: What kind of existential experience may have sparked an utterance about God? Try to catch and share a glimpse of that inspiration.

If the concept of God comes from an overwhelming experience of awe in a glimpse of what exceeds the limitations of man and of all he knows, then we can appreciate the zeal with which our sages tried to keep us from taking too literally the anthropomorphic language of the Bible which is needed to create an emotional bond between us and a God who cares, understands our problems, and gives guidance as a loving father would. An overwhelming sense of awe and boundless mystery would preclude a loving emotional attachment, a basis for joyful, confident living. In the emotional realm we need to bring God down to us so that we can communicate in terms we can understand—again comparing Him to a father who would talk to his child on the child's level. But if that language is carried over from the emotional into the cognitive realm, it may hinder all attempts at understanding by limiting our outlook. Trying to grow in understanding, we must lift ourselves up toward God rather than bring Him down to us. The experience of awe and mystery, of an essential inaccessibility of the ultimate answers, must not be blunted by the dwarfing conditioning inherent in anthropomorphic imagery.

Medieval disputes about the existence and properties of God, using logical derivations from definitions and assumptions, sound strangely empty and beside the point if their aim is to grasp the unfathomable. They seem to start their search for understanding at the wrong end, by imposing, at the outset, a limiting and shallow human frame of concepts and premises upon something that admittedly transcends human limits. If we start the other way around, from an awe-inspiring experience encountered even by us moderns now and then, which could have led to such an exalted word, we might come nearer to a feeling of essential kinship with past generations.

A Dynamic Interpretation.—It is not difficult to recognize an experience of the grandeur of nature and the universe as underlying the concept of God the Creator, or the contemplation of Time as leading to the idea of a Being that Was, Is, and Will Be. Historical happenings transcending the power and time span of individuals have given rise to a sense of

historic awe, seeing God in the preservation of a widely scattered, persecuted people and its ingathering from all corners of the world after nearly 2,000 years. Even secular Israelis were overwhelmed with a humble awe after their own victory in the Six-Day War: "If it was not a miracle, it would be even more miraculous."

But sentences such as "God is good, just and full of compassion" are more complex. They sound naive or even offensive to readers of the newspapers reporting on wars, starvation, persecution, genocide. They are the crucial stumbling blocks, causing alienation in our sensitive, intellectual youth and despairing emptiness in one-time believers. Could we, perhaps, recapture a glimpse of an underlying validating experience by starting the sentence from the other end? Human acts of goodness do occur and do have repercussions; extrapolating their occurrences, depth, and power of transcending the pettiness of human aspirations could well spark an awe-inspiring experience of an uplifting force, called God, and thus give meaning to a sentence such as "Goodness, and justice with mercy, is (in extrapolation to an ideal) *one of several aspects of* what we mean by God." Such an interpretation is more strenuous, as it involves us dynamically; it contrasts with the literal interpretation which posits a metaphysical Being with human attributes. But we are told insistently that God is not corporeal, not like a person, but spiritual. If He can be realized only in *manifestations that lift us up*, then He can never be blamed as the cause of despair; the latter is seen rather as our alienation, and we pray for a return. Is not the thrust of such teaching, although expressed in traditional terminology, directed toward a dynamical interpretation and away from speculations about a metaphysical Being? This does not negate its existence, whatever that may mean, but it leaves the interpretation open. It is emotionally easier to follow the lead of the simple language if we are not challenged to account for the meaning of what we are saying. In everyday life we are likely to disavow either extreme, since the one may superficially sound like atheism (which it is not) and the other like fundamentalism; and we get along quite well with something in between, interpreting from case to case if we cannot avoid it. But in times of great stress and catastrophe the viewpoint will affect our emotional response.

Suffering from physical cause or loss through natural death easily evoke an accusing grief, blaming a hard-hearted supernatural Being; and Job's final acquiescence and affirmation are not easy to come by. The unspeakable horror of the Holocaust has left us stunned. For many survivors, or for contemporaries, God died at Auschwitz and the world lost its light and its meaning. Where was God at that time of need? What kind of God is it who permits such events to happen? Is there a God at all? These are outcries of anguish in the acuteness of suffering; and one does not argue or "console him in the hour when his dead lies before

him" (*Pirke Avot*, IV, 23). The words, however, depict again a callous extranatural Being who could have intervened, but did not, compounding the feeling of hopelessness. The dynamical interpretation of God, by contrast, puts the blame where it belongs: Man has been given the freedom to choose between good and evil, and the world has witnessed the choice of unlimited evil, an unprecedented bestiality of man toward man, which devoured the innocent and poisoned the minds of bystanders. For the perpetrators of those crimes there were no moral checks and God was dead, indeed, for them. Yet, there also was, and still is, a tremendous response of re-identification with Judaism, an unprecedented upsurge of strength to build, establish, and defend the state of Israel, to revive and uphold and intensify Jewish teaching. Where does this strength come from—after such an experience? Could it be that, consciously or unconsciously, we *do* understand and subscribe to the view that Man's freedom of choice between good and evil is a frightful reality, and that somehow we must find ways to check the avalanche of free evil? Could it be that, consciously or unconsciously, we *do* remember and acknowledge the ancient vision of our forbears, committing us to the task of following it in spite of any horrible happenings—or even more so because of such, *because* we have looked into the abyss of man's terrifying capacity for evil? Is it that we sense in our bones that to give up hope, to give up the Sisyphean struggle for a better world, is to give up the world altogether and to let the light go out?

Our sages must have referred to the feeling of futility, the elusiveness of the goal, the temptation to give up, and the strange compulsion to keep a commitment nevertheless, when telling us: "It is not upon you to finish the work, nor are you free to desist from it." (*Pirke Avot* II, 21)

The Death of God.—The phrase, "the death of God," has been used in connection with a move to demythologize the Church in order to focus concern more on the social needs of the people here in this world than on metaphysical concerns in the Beyond. As normative Judaism has fought against mythology and focused its concern on life here and now, its attitude is not affected, but, rather, strengthened by this controversy. But in the sense of living by materialistic values rather than by spiritual or moral ones, we are all affected, on the individual, national, and international level.

In another sense, the phrase was used to show that personal freedom and self-permissiveness in the absence of a punishing Deity leads to despair in the face of Nothingness. But does freedom really mean merely the absence of punishment? Is it not rather comparable to gained and responsible maturity with receding parental enforcement? The Jewish concept of freedom never means license, but the acceptance of responsibilities. Education to "responsible citizenship" aims to nurture inner integrity and self-discipline in place of outside enforcement. Despair in the

face of Nothingness is an emotional problem, and Zalman M. Schachter approaches it this way:

The significance of a speaker for the audience depends on the life span they give him by listening; they are the ones who make him very much alive in their consciousness. Similarly, if we give life span in our consciousness to God, to that extent He is alive for us. But such awareness needs to be nurtured by a repeated conscious commitment.⁴

Taken as a psychological formulation, this interpretation centers on the reciprocity in our emotional experience, and on our capacity to influence that experience. A little four-year-old philosopher, or existentialist, once observed: "When I laugh, the sky and the trees and the whole world laughs with me; and when I cry, everything weeps."

Emotional Involvement.—The recognition of this psychological interaction permits an illuminating insight into the correspondence between the idea of "God, the loving father who cares" and a warm feeling of belonging and communing, of worth and harmony. Jewish response to God and the World is an intimately personal one, excluding any vicariousness. It has a quality of first-line birthright and direct filial communication with God, and this may explain a characteristic Jewish mixture, in so many stories, of addressing God with familiarity and reverence at the same time—so strange to non-Jewish ears. No irreverence is contained in the stories by Sholom Aleichem and others which contain arguments with God about the way a poor Jew is expected to live, nor is there any blasphemy in Abraham's rebuke of God's unjust intent to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah with perhaps fifty innocent people in it. On the contrary, it means bringing all one's serious worries, the practical ones of daily living and the intellectual ones about principles of justice, to an understanding father for discussion; in the course of a searching meditation a perspective is gained, which helps to transcend the daily worries, or reveals the premises to be incorrect, as in Abraham's case. There is a dynamical involvement in creating an atmosphere of higher awareness, which applies to the whole person; it is an all-inclusive, existential response.

Such awareness is being nurtured by an all-pervasive blending with daily life. The orthodox Jew reminds himself of God's presence at every turn throughout his day by a routine of numerous *brakhot* and rituals; in return, he never feels lonely or forgotten. For the rest of us, it takes more conscious doing. But even for us there is not supposed to be a sharp separation between the "holy" and the "secular." The latter refers to our daily activities at home, at business, or wherever we may be, and the former refers to our personal outlook by which we can put meaning into our activities, and receive a response of meaning.

4. The Sunday Morning Scholar Series, 1967, Washington Hebrew Congregation, Washington, D.C.

The feeling of an authentic experience of a mutual bond between God and the Jewish people has been the mainspring of Jewish survival and vitality. It has been fenced in as a priceless treasure, and has given rise to a miraculous strength to be different from the surrounding cultures and to withstand a hostile world of other peoples.

Layers of Understanding.—Religious language has rich undertones of several layers of understanding, which can be invoked according to emotional need or intellectual quest. This orchestra of meanings enables us to grow in understanding without disrupting the traditional formulation which, in turn, acts as a guide to exploring the various consonant connotations. Yet there also is the power of a word by itself which may take on a life of its own in its narrow literal sense, and lead us inadvertently down the lazy path of least resistance towards a shallow everyday usage, which then suddenly strikes us as trite and simple-minded. It is then when it is most useful to ask: What do you really mean by a sentence such as "I don't believe in God." Are you protesting the belief in an old man with a white beard sitting somewhere out there in space (a Russian astronaut reported that he had not seen any out there), are you rebelling against an inexorable fate that plays with us as with puppets (Judaism rebels against such an idea, too), are you irritated by the use of religion as a psychological tool of power (Jews know how it feels to be its victims), do you mean to say that there is no point in striving for a better world, do you simply reject contemporary forms of religious services, are you perhaps feeling emotionally low and out of line with the world, or do you only object to the use or misuse of the language?

III. *Facing Reality and Accepting Responsibility*

The tension between human limitations and aspirations has agitated man since the earliest times when facing death, good and evil, the question of free will or of responsibility versus frustration. What can we find in Jewish thought that makes sense to us today?

Life and Death.—The Hebrew Bible accepts old age and death as facts of life. In ancient stories, such as Gilgamesh for instance, the preoccupation with the finitude of human life is expressed in themes of searching for a plant or some magic circumstances to achieve immortality and eternal youth. The tree of life in the story of Eden is an indication of the widespread existence of such motifs in the folklore, but the Biblical response is significantly different. The Genesis story selectively underplays the tree of life, while focusing on the moral theme of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Ideas of eternal life and resurrection entered Judaism relatively late, and interpretations vary from a literal belief in physical resurrection at the end of time, to a vague idea of the soul's eternal life after physical

death, to a trust in the survival of the Jewish people, and to the sophisticated identification of eternal life with the loving memory in the minds of the living. The latter seems like a modern return to the Biblical strength of accepting death realistically as part of life, thus establishing harmony with our secular understanding. Judaism stresses the value of life in this world and discourages preoccupation with an unknowable beyond. "Into the things that are too hidden, inquire thou not. In what is permitted to thee, instruct thyself; thou hast no business with secret things" (Ben Sira). The quest for life is frequently sublimated into the quest for a meaningful spiritual life in the sense that the Torah is referred to as "a tree of life."⁵

Good and Evil.—Jewish tradition distinguishes between the evil coming to us from natural events, and the evil done by man. The first comes from God, together with the good (as opposed to a dualistic world view of eternal war between independent good and evil forces) and we have to accept it as we have to accept our mortality. It is part of the universal scheme, but we should alleviate it where we can. The second is up to us: "It has been told thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of thee: to act justly, to practice kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8).

The good and evil impulses are seen as normal features of our nature, neither good nor bad in themselves, but becoming so with use or misuse. "Were it not for the evil impulse, no man would build a house, take a wife. . ." (Genesis *Rabbah*, 9:7), there would be no ambition, no civilization. The moral effort is directed, not toward repression, but toward sublimation—a rather modern psychological and pedagogical insight. We are enjoined to "serve God with all our might," which is taken to mean, "with both the good and the evil impulse." The Christian interpretation that eating the forbidden fruit symbolizes the Original Sin which burdens all generations unless removed by mysterious baptism, is in sharp contrast to the Jewish conviction of the intrinsic worth and dignity of each individual (Jew and non-Jew). "God created man in His own image" (Gen. 1:27).

Free Will and Responsibility.—A moral life presupposes freedom in choosing one's actions and responsibility for them. But how free are we? We think that we are making a free personal decision, say, to marry, yet there is a statistically predicted number of annual marriages. An event beyond our control may change our life's plan, giving us the feeling that we are not at all the masters of our destiny, but victims of chance. Observations of cause and effect in physical nature may lead to the doctrine

5. An aggadic musing, that Adam should have eaten first from the tree of life, leads to the thought that Adam could not have been even aware of the tree of life before he had the knowledge to distinguish good from evil. The tree of life was hidden in the tree of knowledge.

of predestination: we are programmed, and there is nothing we can do about it.

Jewish insistence on personal responsibility, however, makes an important distinction: We are permitted to dominate the world (by *studying* and *applying* the laws of nature in science, technology, medicine, and other fields, *not by disregarding them*), but we are also part of nature and subject to its laws. Freedom of choice refers only to decisions in *these given circumstances*. Responsibility refers to *moral* decisions in the given circumstances. Our secular decision-making conforms to this view as common sense. The difficulties arise when sweeping philosophic assumptions are introduced. Thus, "predestination" may serve as a cover for frustration, as a justification for undeserved success, or as an escape from responsibility; it is, therefore, rejected by Judaism. God's omniscience and omnipotence, philosophically a contradiction to man's responsibility, is acknowledged as a theoretical paradox beyond man's grasp; it is not acknowledged as an excuse for avoiding moral responsibility, and is thus made inconsequential for all practical purposes.

The concept of God's omniscience and omnipotence is based on anthropomorphic imagery, and has no factual meaning since there is no way of verification. Its message of grandeur has a strong emotional appeal, expressed in the poetic language of the Psalms and the liturgy as an exuberance of religious awe and reverence. This is on a very different plane from the medieval theological and philosophical disputes about God's properties.

Rabbi Akiba's famous "All is foreseen, yet free will is given" has been quoted as the Jewish acceptance of this paradox. The continuation "and the world is judged by goodness, and all is according to the amount of work" makes it even more paradoxical because of its partial non-sequitur. Yet, the Hebrew text does not necessarily contain that paradox. The key word is *zafuy*, which may mean "foreseen," but may also mean simply "seen, observed, reconnoitered." The word *zofim* has been used for soothsayers, but the Israeli boy scouts today are also called *zofim*, and they are not prophets. Scouting means to search out information and conditions before action is planned or carried out. With this meaning of the word, the whole saying becomes beautifully coherent. Translated freely, it would mean: "Having searched all our alternatives (including our human limitations), we are permitted to choose. (In so doing we should consider that) it is goodness that gives worth and meaning to the world, and all depends on the amount of our effort (in that direction)." In other words: Consider first the situation, what you could or could not do about it and what the consequences of your actions would be in the circumstances. You are free to choose among those actions open to you. But the choice should be based on moral values, and all depends on your efforts to uphold these moral values. Adhering to the actual text,

the epigram changes from an abstruse contradiction read into it for centuries, to the Jewish affirmation of man's obligation to participate in building a better world.⁶

The Search for Genuine Values.—Making the right choice in those situations where we have a choice presupposes guidelines for what is right or wrong. Different cultures may have different ideas about that, reflecting their general outlook on life. The Jewish response is a commitment to a positive outlook on life, to the unique worth and inherent dignity of each individual including oneself, the preciousness and sanctity of life, the brotherhood of man, social justice as an inalienable right, and the obligation to seek redress where there is violation.

Accordingly, the Jewish guidelines are not set up as an unattainable ideal of human behavior, but for down-to-earth application to daily living.⁷ The realization that times are changing and issues are changing with them, that the wording reflects a historical setting while the message may be a glimpse of a lasting truth, implies an obligation to a continuous search for relevant reinterpretation in order to cope with a life-situation at hand. This continuous search is reflected in the endless and detailed interpretations of Scripture and in the endless and detailed discussions of such interpretations. One gets the impression that the different viewpoints recorded in the Talmud are not just phases superseded by a final decision, but that they have their own importance in broadening the approach to an elusive insight, in the common effort of translating the wisdom of one age into wisdom meaningful to another, without losing the essence of the insight. It is also reflected in the traditional preoccupation with education for its two-fold purpose: to help the individual rise to a more meaningful life spiritually, and to help people live together in spite of their personal differences. Here is the obligation to self-discipline as the other side of individual dignity and self-respect, and the obligation to self-restriction in society as the other side of freedom. The authority of teachers and leaders is based solely on respect for their greater knowledge and wisdom, their personal integrity, and their capability to promote understanding.

Timeless Relevance.—Young people of the serious and sensitive type are searching for meaning and genuine values in life. They are deeply concerned about the direction of mankind's pursuits and the kind of world which they will inherit. Not only the young are concerned. Our fantastic technological development carries in it the seed of Frankenstein's monster with the double threat of spiritual dehumanization and

6. Rabbi Robert Gordis drew my attention to the identical syntactic construction in Ecc. 12:13, "*hakol nishma* . . . having heard everything." See translation and a discussion in R. Gordis, *Koheleth—The Man and His World* (Schocken Books, 1968), p. 355.

7. Deut. 30:11-14, "For this Commandment . . . is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven . . . , neither is it beyond the sea. . . . But the word is very nigh to thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou may do it."

of physical annihilation. The enormity of today's problems on every level seems to spell out the failure and collapse of traditional value systems in a bewildering world that never had its like before.

But in human terms of anxiety within surrounding bewilderment, are we really uniquely taxed today or is it our lack of immediacy and empathy that makes us think so? Was it easier for our ancestors when, with the destruction of the Temple and of the city of Jerusalem, their world came crashing down, when the Crusaders or the Inquisition hunted and tortured people in the name of God, when . . . when . . . We Jews have a long memory and we have learned to weep with hope, and to rejoice with a heavy heart—and *to search for a positive way to respond*. As individuals we are not always capable of learning from this long collective experience, from the insight and response of our forefathers; we do not easily recognize the basic similarity of human problems in vastly different circumstances, whether in nomadic or medieval societies or our own "enlightened" age of space travel and the bomb.

Yet, our current problems of race riots, genocide, and hate propaganda are just modern versions of man's inhumanity to man, opposed by Judaism with its profound Basic Principle of man's inherent worth—echoed in our United States Constitution.

Our current problems of slums and poverty in the world's richest nation, of air and sea pollution, of oil and power politics on the international scene, and of the pressures of conspicuous material consumption are modern forms of "worshipping the idols" of material values in indifference to that Basic Principle.

Our current crime wave in the cities brings home to us how disregard for the Commandments "Thou shall not murder; thou shall not steal" literally disrupts the life of a city.

Judaism is vitally concerned with humanizing Man. With its Basic Principle of man's unique and supreme worth, its Messianic Vision of a humane society, and its insistence on the obligation to work for the realization of that vision, it puts meaning, hope, and purpose into life. In the face of unbelievable persecution, denigration, and suffering throughout the millennia, the Jewish people clung to these values and committed generation after generation to their sustaining strength in coping with life's vicissitudes. Their rediscovery by modern psychology as vital ingredients for a life with meaning was anteceded by millennia of Judaic insight and grappling with man's nature. These great gifts of Judaism to mankind have entered the mainstream of civilization, but—as we notice appallingly in the 20th century—they have been given lip service only and the humanizing effect is but skin-deep. Judaism's psychological intuition goes a step further: it is not enough to know lofty ideas intellectually, from literature or sermons; they must be lived in constant permeation of daily life so that they become part of our ex-

istence and produce an almost automatic coloring of our daily responses.

But is not the primary function of religion to provide definite answers to the ultimate questions about God and the universe, life after death, reward and punishment, so that we know for sure what this is all about? Is not revelation and mystical encounter a factual avenue to knowledge of the Beyond with certainty?

Revelation in normative Jewish tradition, as on Mount Sinai or in prophecy, is concerned with our actions in life here and now, not with facts about a Beyond. Judaism stresses the marvel of life and the universe, a sense of awe and reverence about its ultimate mystery; but it is remarkably undogmatic about metaphysical beliefs (undecidable propositions) as long as they do not interfere with life's business and do not stand for a cop-out. There is no *binding* systematic theology in the philosophical sense, even though there have been attempts at systematizing a Jewish viewpoint. As a people consists of a wide variety of individuals with different responses to ultimate questions, so there are representatives of all shades of private viewpoints in Judaism, ranging from fundamentalism to atheism, from superstitions to elaborate mystical systems and rationalistic reinterpretations. The mainstream of normative Judaism accepts the realities of human limitations. Attempts to transcend them are discouraged for two reasons: for the futility in bringing a useful message to others and for keeping one's sanity. It is told that four sages went on "a trip" to the Pardess (of mystical speculation); one gazed and died, one gazed and became insane, one found himself isolated, and only one of the four, Rabbi Akiba, the master of Halakhah, returned safe and sane. And there is the well-known saying of the Baal Shem Tov: "Who knows, cannot tell; who tells, does not know."

It has been suggested that today's use of mind-expanding drugs is akin to the trip of the four ancient sages or to means used by Cabbalists to induce a state of ecstasy in preparation for a mystic revelation. If the effect of the drug is the release from one's rational inhibitive faculties, the content of the induced vision still depends on the rest of the individual's faculties and would be vastly different for an escapist teenager today or, say, a Rabbi Akiba. But the main thing is the fact that such visions are personal experiences without communicable messages. Moreover, the effects of today's drug epidemic do not stay private but touch tragically the lives of others.

The use of drugs as a naive shortcut to "understanding the universe," the fascination with astrology, the uncritical acceptance of some esoteric Truth, together with the summary rejection of the "establishment" seem to express an escapist gullibility in expecting quick magic answers to all the ills of the world. But we are also told that much of the juvenile behavior is really a symptom of a more general, bona fide cultural revolution, a rebellion against empty materialistic values of the older genera-

tion, even though there is as yet no constructive program of change. If so, then we all should join forces. The fighting lines for higher human values do not separate the young from the old, but go through all age groups. Judaism has been fighting for such values for thousands of years, and it has recognized that wishful thinking about Messianic days without a sense of reality leads nowhere, and that realism without a Messianic vision leaves life meaningless.

In our time of apparently changing value standards and of weakening family and community bonds, it is more difficult for the individual to find his bearing, his own ultimate values and self-identity. It seems more important than ever to develop and strengthen individual integrity and a capacity of resisting contemporary clichés and half truths, of being different if need be, of learning from the realities of history and of a great heritage, and of searching honestly for a constructive approach.

A Comprehensive Jewish Policy for the 70's

T S V I B I S K

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMUNITY IS IN CRISIS.

This point has been agreed upon so often that it is now a cliché. Yet the question remains: What does the community intend doing about it? At present, despite much breastbeating and handwringing, nothing. Clearly, the dilemma demands a comprehensive policy for solution, a policy which defines and combats the three problems common to most of American Jewry. These are: the quality of Jewish life in America; the existence and survival of Israel; and the salvation of Russian Jewry. All are inter-related; addressing them singularly is futile, for the following reasons:

1) Without a meaningful spiritual renaissance—of necessity stemming from a real reform of Jewish education—American Jewry will continue to estrange its youth and will inevitably face extinction through assimilation. In that case, what will be Israel's chances for survival, in the light of her dependence on the financial power, political influence and potential *aliyah* of American Jewry? Who will fight for Russian Jewry and who will provide the means for their absorption when they are finally released? Educational reform and spiritual renaissance are not egotistical slogans pertaining only to American Jewry; they are aims which are directly related to a general Jewish salvation and the survival of Israel.

2) If Israel perishes, so will world Jewry. What else can inspire Russian Jews in their struggle and what other framework can absorb them when they are finally liberated? Israel is also the focus of Western Jewry. After the Holocaust, and with the secularization of most of the Jewish people, it is the dream of Israel which provides the spiritual inspiration and practical outlet necessary for continued Jewish survival.

3) What symbolizes the national renaissance of the Jewish people more than the phoenix-like ascent of a renewed Jewish consciousness among Russian Jewry? What, in the past few years, has done more to dispel the egotistic self-pity of Western Jewry? Is not Russian Jewry at once the shaming inspiration for Western Jewry and the reaffirmation and justification of Israel's *raison d'être*? Is this not the one cause which can unite all Jewry, even *anti-Zionists*? The premature abortion of this awesome historical event might well have a disastrous effect on the *élan vital* of all Jewry, including Israel, and may possibly be the premonition of its final curtain.

TSVI BISK, a former American, now settled in Israel, is a research assistant at Beit Berl.

American Jewry and Israel must be seen as equal partners in the formulation of a comprehensive Jewish policy which would be valid for the following reasons: a) world Jewry is more and more a homogeneous polity—secular, professional and rich (Russian Jewry is not rich but it is secular and professional); b) the availability of modern mass communication and transportation (when representatives of the world-wide Jewish communities can come together anywhere in the world within twenty-four hours, there is an unprecedented possibility for Jewish contact and proximity); c) the centrality and potential leadership of Israel.

DIASPORA LEADERSHIP

The Diaspora is bereft of leadership; nowhere do we find names such as Weizman, Silver, Wise or Brandeis. When we speak of “American Jewish Leaders” today, we are speaking of managers, administrators of Bond drives and Israel campaigns. These people are valuable and good Jews, but they are not *leaders*. They do not possess a great idea, they do not possess charisma, and they are not elected in general elections in which the majority of Jewry takes part.

Moreover, as practical men, as men of economic activity rather than spiritual contemplation, as men who are, at best, political lobbyists and not political leaders, they lack the essential understanding of the spiritual-social-political crisis—this grey inertia—which besets American Jewry and, indeed, the entire western Diaspora today. *The fault is not theirs!* It is a result of the tensions and demands of history following World War II, and, in a major way, Israel and Zionism are responsible for this crisis in leadership.

Judaism and Jewry began acting in a political way, as a political entity, in the 19th century, in the pluralistic emancipated countries of the West. There were great Diaspora political leaders because there was no other means of Jewish political expression, no Jewish state and restricted Jewish political activity in the home country. Two things have happened in the 20th century to change this situation: 1) a Jewish State was founded, automatically becoming the focus of a specifically Jewish political activity; 2) the barriers to Jewish political activity within the greater gentile society came tumbling down, so that today Jewish mayors, governors and members of Congress and Parliament are commonplace.

Jewish political leadership became either “secular” (i.e. not specifically Jewish) in persons like Javits, Ribicoff, Goldberg, Mandel, etc., or Israeli. The specifically Jewish political figures of today are not Wise, Silver, Weizman or Rothschild (all Diaspora leaders), but Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan, Yigal Allon and Abba Eban—all Israelis. This change is, perhaps, inevitable and is, perhaps, as it should be, but it does not explain the whole story. In what ways are Zionism and Israel responsible?

Again, the fault is unintentional and the result of the demands of a specific crisis in Jewish history. But it has resulted in great damage and, therefore, should be discussed.

After the Holocaust, and with the establishment of the State of Israel, huge Jewish relief works became the order of the day. Great new Jewish and Zionist philanthropic organizations were created and the old ones greatly expanded. It became the mark of a good Jew to contribute. Men of finance, business and management, being uniquely suited to this undertaking, soon dominated American Jewish life in an unprecedented manner. To be sure, men of capital had always been prominent in Jewry—both Eastern European and Oriental—but were also, at best, equal partners or, more usually, played second fiddle to the spiritual giants of the community. At no time was the dominance of men of property in Jewish affairs so complete as it is today. (Perhaps the fact that most Jews are propertied middle class has lent the proper atmosphere to this phenomenon.)

This process was greatly encouraged by Israel which, with great social needs, looked upon the western Diaspora primarily as a financial resource. Men of capital were wined and dined in Israel; buildings were named after them; Knesset resolutions were passed praising them; they were called great leaders by men of the stature of Ben-Gurion—all to encourage them in their fundraising tasks. What was the effect of this on many Jewish intellectuals and youth? Perhaps the following will give a clue.

Campaign Judaism has almost consciously emptied itself of all higher aspirations and spiritual needs and has willingly limited itself to the role of a financial milk cow for others. . . . How can a community such as this, whose highest ideal is mechanical fundraising, be the source of nobility and greatness? Can the interminable big and even bigger Bond and UJA drives, the Hadassah teas, the gaudy banquets, the garish publicity and appalling bad taste, be the soil from which greatness will spring? Can Salesmanship, even when clothed with the mantle of philanthropy, be anything but shallow and sterile? (Article by William Zuckerman from the *Jewish Newsletter* (N.Y.), Vol. VIII, No. 18, Sept. 1, 1952.)

The campaigns, the philanthropy, the fundraising were all necessary and, perhaps, Zuckerman is being overly purist in regards to a period of great Jewish crisis when expedience *was* morality. Nonetheless, we cannot ignore the fact that this is the reason why so many of our most sensitive and intelligent brethren have left the fold, and why, for all its physical strength (great financial resources, tremendous power as a political lobby), American Jewry is perhaps the weakest community spiritually in Jewish history, and, therefore, the most endangered. The building is strong, but it is empty.

ISRAEL'S TASK

Israel must adapt a subtle stance. It must continue to cater to the men of capital, but it must also align itself with those segments of the Jewish community (intellectuals, students, Jewish radicals) who are calling for significant changes in priorities. It is a difficult task because these segments are very often at odds with each other.

Above all, Israel must be forthright in pointing out where the "establishment" has failed and in pointing out where the dissidents are being unfair or even irresponsible. Israel must convince the "establishment" that a reordering of the priorities of the American Jewish community (especially in education) is vital for all Jewry (and not just American Jewry). On the other hand, Israel must strive to educate the dissidents to an awareness of the subtlety and precariousness of Jewish existence; that these "moneyed court-Jews," as they are so disparagingly called, have provided, still do provide, and will continue to provide a vital service to the Jewish people; that the projects which they would like to see implemented—although giving the intellectuals a more prominent place—still depend ultimately on the capital and administrative skill of these "court-Jews." So much of the anger of the establishment and the disillusionment of the dissidents with Israel has been a result of a lack of forthrightness with both groups. Instead of telling both groups what is wanted, or needed, in the American community, Israel tells them both what they want to hear. If people must be angered or disillusioned by Israel, at least let it be in connection with a position which possesses clarity.

Israel's (and American Jewry's) aim should be the return to the proper balance between the material and the spiritual in the American Jewish community. One may ask why this is Israel's concern; is it not a task for the American Jewish community? Formally, yes; but since American Jewry is in a muddy inertia of mutual recrimination and Israel is the one Jewish factor that most Jewish groupings can identify with, Israel *does* have a serious and practical role to play here. Israel's representatives should be able to give enlightened criticism, not just pandering praise. Let Israel's representatives at the Bond drives make known Israel's disappointment at the state of Jewish education. If such statements were well made, and by men of the stature of Rabin, Dayan or Eban, they could have more real effect on Jewish priorities than all the dissident demonstrations against the federations.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

First, the American Jewish community must change from a philanthropic entity to a political one. This is a process which has already begun, following the Black-Jewish crisis and the new political-economic

demands of Israel after the Six-Day War. But it is an unintentional reactive happening; it must become intentional and initiative.

The community must be democratized. There must be one central organization in which all Jewry is represented by universal vote. Individual Jewish organizations (current and new) would be represented in the roof body as either parties or lobbies. The new political character of Jewry, resulting from such an organization, would allow it to create functional alliances with other groups in American society around specific points in common. For example: It is to the interest of the Blacks to have Black culture taught in the public schools (Swahili, Black history, and the like); it is to the interest of the Jews to have Hebrew culture taught in the schools (Hebrew, Jewish history, and similar studies). Result: alliance. It is to the interest of the Catholics to have government aid for parochial schools; it is to the interest of the Jews to have government aid for Jewish day schools. Result: alliance. If Black leaders want continued Jewish contributions to Black community services, then they must argue Israel's case in Africa, and elsewhere. Political stress such as this would provide the proper atmosphere for the rise of great Jewish political leaders. Such a phenomenon would, in turn, allow for a more statesmanly political behavior, instead of the *praxis* politically opportunistic attitude outlined above (which, nonetheless, is the necessary first step; there can be no statesmanship without politics first). Above all, the phony smiling brotherhood nonsense of Jewish political behavior must be avoided. The "we are all suffering minorities" theory of political alliance is absurd. American Jewish alienation has nothing whatsoever in common with American Black alienation and pretending that it does is not only wrong, it is dangerous. The Black is no better or worse than any other man (a liberal truism which the Jewish liberals and radicals seem to ignore when it is convenient for them). When we have a common interest with the Black man, we should try to align with him; when we do not, we have no obligation to do so (there being no *intrinsic* sense in such an alignment, neither for him nor for us); when our interests are diametrically opposed we should oppose him (without any self-recrimination). Enlightened self-interest is the order of the day.

Secondly, there must be a secular American equivalent for the Yeshivah culture of East European Jewry. (The word secular here applies in its widest sense and means not just Orthodox.) The cultural vitality of East European Jewry was sustained around the Yeshivot. American Jewry needs a comparable system of Jewish colleges, Junior colleges, and Institutes (such as the Brandeis Institute in Los Angeles) in which the spiritual renaissance of American Jewry will be molded. Modern Hebrew must become the *lingua franca* of all Jewry, as was Yiddish to East European Jewry. It must be the major task of modern Jewish education to give the Jewish people a common language.

American Jewry has often been compared to Babylonian, Spanish or East European Jewry in terms of its contribution to Jewish history and culture. Unfortunately, the validity of the comparison exists only in the *potential* sense. For all its financial and political strength, American Jewry is but an offshoot, a pale shadow as it were, of East European Jewry. American Jewry is riven with a cultural inferiority complex in regards to culture which it has inherited. It is not self-confident and, instead of striving to be creative, indulges in fantasized nostalgia for the *Yiddishkeit* of its grandfathers. Arthur Lewis, the Black intellectual, has pointed out the intrinsic negativeness of this attitude in refuting Black cultural nationalism.

. . . only decadent peoples, on the way down, feel an urgent need to mythologize and live in their past. A vigorous people, on the way up, is more concerned with visions of its future. (*Dialogue*, Vol. 3, 1970, No. 2, published by USIA.)

What are the future visions of American Jewry? How are they to be expressed and molded? Will we be satisfied by the new wave of Gentile Judophilia? Will we be satisfied by the new role of being tearfully nostalgic after the “old ways” and our “warm-hearted Yiddishe mamas” at cocktail parties and in student unions (how the Gentiles love such gentle-eyed Jewish scenes, and how the Jews love playing them), or will we create a new Jewish reality—vigorous and original—drawing on historic roots, but with its direction clearly upward?

Thirdly, a new relationship must be worked out with world Jewry, in general, and with Israel, in particular. Such a relationship may be based on practical activity on behalf of Russian Jewry or of Israel, but it must be new in its essence. It must be characterized by honesty and forthrightness, ready to give and receive criticism. Israel, especially, must be honest with the Diaspora. Israel must present a true face—and not the stereotyped image it has become of the smiling Sabra with an Uzi on one arm, a sensuous female on the other and an orange in each ear (the image which American Jewry loves to love). Israel must be honest about the ethnic problems, the ideological conflicts (both internal and with Diaspora Jewry), the cultural barrenness (the danger of becoming a little America) and the growing militarism amongst certain segments of the youth (and the provincialism of the youth in general). Yet Israel must invite and initiate projects—in partnership with the Diaspora—to overcome these specific problems. Above all, Israel must be concerned with making of itself a real center of Jewish cultural and spiritual life. It must not be satisfied with being a financial fiefdom of American Jewry, but must strive to become a radiating and attracting focal point for the entire soul of the house of Israel.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBILITIES OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP?

Jewry, with Israel as the national center of a universal Diaspora, is in a unique and, perhaps, unprecedented position. The relationship of Israel and the Diaspora is essentially the same as that which existed within Jewry after the first return from exile and the building of the Second Temple, the result of which was the writing of the Talmud and the compilation of the Bible—the most creative period in Jewish history.

Today's situation presents the same opportunity to be creative. This creativity may be more concrete and social than spiritual, but it will, nonetheless, be in the service of the messianic dream. "Give me a place to stand and I will move the planet," said the Greek mathematician. The Jews have been given a place to stand and may very well do just that.

Israel is a semi-developed country at the crossroads of three continents, and between the developed and developing worlds. Half its population comes from the developed part of the world and the other half from the developing part. Half its land is developed, the other half not. Within its borders are contained, in microcosm, all of the world's major problems. Diaspora Jewry, on the other hand, is the singly most developed community in the world; a development combined with a disproportionate social idealism and universal outlook. This unique combination within Jewry offers a unique opportunity to fulfill the national-universal mission of the House of Israel within the framework of projects aimed at the achievement of the social message of Israel as prophesied in the Bible. Witness the remarks of the Baron Edmond de Rothschild at the Economic Conference in Israel in 1968:

Israel stands at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe. Israel stands at the crossroads of the developed and the developing countries. . . . We are the people who can lay the cornerstone of real cooperation between the developed and developing countries. . . . This is about to become the greatest and the most difficult task of our generation and that of our children. . . . It is not a matter of communism versus capitalism, but of poverty versus wealth. We Jews must undertake the mission, pave the way. . . . There are certain things that we must do. We are here for something more important than mere investment. We have many fields and many opportunities for the investment of our money, but I do not think that we have another opportunity—not one—where we can prove that the Jewish people, the people that received the Bible, is a people that understands that it has a special mission in the world and that the great connection between Israel and the Diaspora is a spiritual one aimed at improving the world.

Israel's past successes in regard to aid to the developing world have been the result of the ability to translate western technology into appropriate instruments for development. The relative failure of the big powers to do as much has been their inability to forge appropriate instruments for development. Diaspora Jewry, as the bearer of western

technology, and Israel as the translator of this technology—a bridge,* as it were, offers the Jewish people a unique opportunity to serve a pioneering role, with Israel as a world laboratory, in the solving of this epic problem.

This union will be in the tradition of the messianic dream and will finally compromise the tension between national and universal redemption that exists in Judaism and which has sown so much confusion in Jewish youth. For only by accentuating Jewish uniqueness and the uniqueness of the Jewish character and mission can the universal task be accomplished. And only by undertaking this universal task can the Jewish national entity strengthen itself, make itself so indispensable to universal redemption, that in this role its physical survival will be guaranteed. To paraphrase Joseph Ratner's description of Spinoza, we must become prophets *in Israel for mankind*.

CONCLUSION

There is no essential contradiction between socio-political activity and cultural-spiritual renaissance. Cultural and spiritual developments in Judaism have never been the results of hermits sitting alone contemplating their navels. They have been the result of active men taking active part in the communal affairs of the Jews and of society in general. Most ideological and intellectual developments are existential; they reflect the concrete needs and situations of a people. The part which human will and creativity have to play lies in coming to terms with these new situations in ways that will provide the inspiration and cultural impetus for the people to survive and to continue in their historic gamble. It is apparent that, without a serious confrontation with the specific problems of the Jewish people, the new cultural and spiritual forms cannot come into existence.

* For a more sustained description of the bridge concept, see "Israel as a Challenge—from her 20th Anniversary to the Year 2000," by Mordechai Nessyahu, *Am Oved*, 1969, Israel; and "Aliya—Suggestions for a Long Term Program," by Mordechai Nessyahu and Tsvi Bisk in *Dispersion and Unity*, No. 10, 1970, published by the Organization and Information Department of the World Zionist Organization.

Jonah—A Parable For Our Time

CHAIM LEWIS

OVER THE YEARS THE STORY OF JONAH HAS LOST none of its appeal. It is a shapely tale, tersely told, fast-moving and couched in a Hebrew of practiced simplicity. It has the spaciousness of roomy oceans and big-bellied sea monsters, the brooding mystery of man and vessel caught in the coils of wind and storm, and characters oddly opposed, the one a human frailty hiding and the other a discovering Eye searching, both engaged in some fateful debate which ends as it began, with Jonah a sulking creature of defeat.

There is enough here to nourish the wildest fantasy of the child in each one of us. And yet for all its incredibility as story, it carries the conviction of a true happening, as though it held all the nerve-ends of a human sensibility in its embrace.

You instinctively know that Jonah is no real personage but a human predicament, his escape stage-managed, the storm a *coup de théâtre*, the whale an imaged appetite, Nineveh a symbol of evil to rail against, bearing only a rumored connection with the historic city of that name, and Tarshish, for all its reality of place, a pipe-dream isle of escape, an illusory refuge.

It is only when the story is taken apart in this way that it begins to enter its own realm of reality, that it achieves its true completeness. As you pick out all the elements in the story they soon shed their face-value identities and shape into the haunting presences of nightmarish dream.

It is then that you find yourself faced with the perils of interpretation. Symbols, like dreams, have a way of riding off on their own; they refuse to be tethered. Tie them to any one meaning and they will assert the freedom of another. This is in the nature of symbols; they insist on wide latitudes of meaning. They rejoice in their ambivalences, at once inviting and defying our efforts at exploration.

But interpret we must, however great the risk of personal error. We need to clutch at every clue in the hope that some door may open to reveal the secret truth locked within. And the story of Jonah, like Pharaoh's dream, cries out for an interpreter.

The "facts" of this tale are plain enough. In Jonah we meet with the marked man of fate, the man of ill-omen. The lot falls on him. He carries his prophetic rôle like an albatross around his neck. Other prophets have shown a similar unwillingness to serve, but largely out of a feeling of their own unworthiness. Not so with Jonah; his reluctance

CHAIM LEWIS is the Director of the Cultural Department of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies and editor of "Jewish Affairs."

stems from a stubborn temperament. He has determined views of his own. He is *toto* God-fearing to defy and too opinionated to submit. And so, he embraces the drug of escape.

History or fable, this is the sum of the Jonah story. It occupies four breathless, spell-binding chapters of our Bible to Obadiah's meagre one, to Nahum's three, Habbakuk's three, Zephaniah's three, Haggai's two and Malachi's three. And yet, for all Jonah's four chapters, the burden of his prophetic utterance adds up to one single, croaking sentence of doom—"In another forty days Nineveh shall be overthrown." The rest is tale, a story of escape, a chiding lesson, with the Lord as patient Master and Jonah his gloomy, dissident pupil. In the ensuing debate the Lord, of course, has the last triumphant word:

Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I have pity on Nineveh. . . ?

The curtain drops here. In the face of this powerfully pitched *kal ve-homer*, Jonah is reduced to silence. But is it the silence of assent or that of defeat? We are left to guess.

Considering that we have here a running debate between God and Jonah—true, merely hinted at for most of the story, only to surface to the top in the clinching argument at the end—we cannot but wonder why the Book of Jonah lodges among the minor prophets. Its place surely is with Job among the wisdom books of the Bible.

In many ways Jonah is a lesser Job—both hewn out of the same creative rock. In fact, there is a remarkable kinship between the two books in theme and style of writing. Both engage God in debate, both deal with the irk of being, both challenge God's justice, Job centrally—Why do the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper—Jonah marginally—Why should the wicked go unpunished? In the matter of argument the Book of Jonah would seem to be the more convincing. For in Job we are left with the feeling that God wins out by awesome intimidation. He "bullies" Job into submission. He meets Job's challenge by indirection—My justice is beyond the ken of man, my ways past fathoming. By comparison, in Jonah, all is rational argument—the debate is pitched at a more humanly acceptable level.

Again, both show the same schooled craft in the art of story-telling. The narrative never falters—such the pith and pace of the writing—while the story framework of Job is too flimsy, too contrived, to carry the cut and thrust of the sublime debate that follows.

From a structural point of view, then, Jonah is the more finished work; it achieves all it sets out to do in the smallest compass; story and lesson merging into a single whole. Our interest in Jonah as man and symbol is held to the very end.

But all this is by the way. Central to our understanding of the

Book of Jonah is the character of Jonah himself. His theology and his moral stance become explicable only when we have the true measure of the man. On a first judgment, Jonah strikes us as censorious and ill-tempered. He is a man of few words, fixed in opinion, forthright to the point of bluntness, jealous of his God and faith—*"I am a Hebrew; and I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven, who hath made the sea and dry land."* This is how he declares his identity to the sailors.

He is not without a desperate courage, fortified by a burning sense of justice: *Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea: for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you.* These are not the words of a coward, but of a man burdened with guilt. He flees from his divinely appointed task, but not out of faintheartedness. He has the temerity to stand by his convictions and is foolhardy enough to act on them even to the point of courting the Lord's disfavor.

That he should conceive of God as a presence to escape from may strike the modern reader as betokening a naive notion of the Godhead. But we should be guilty of hasty judgment in supposing such simplicity in Jonah. There is nothing "tribal" about Jonah's vision of God as so many Biblical commentators would have us believe. In subscribing to this view they have been misled, perhaps, by their own strict reading of the relevant Hebrew text—"And Jonah fled from the presence of the Lord." The phrase, *from the presence of the Lord*, in the original Hebrew, is not always to be taken literally. It is sometimes used idiomatically, as here and elsewhere in the Bible, for the purpose of emphasis, and its meaning in the present context would roughly be that "Jonah defiantly fled" or "Jonah fled *openly and demonstratively*." This use of God-linking idiom to express emphasis is common in Biblical Hebrew. In the Book of Jonah itself we find Nineveh described in the original Hebrew as "*a great city unto God*" which has rightly been rendered in some English versions as "Nineveh was an *exceeding* great city."

If we accept this linguistic gloss then the whole story of Jonah takes on a new dimension. Contrary to what has been the generally accepted reading of the story, Jonah is not escaping from God, for there can be no flight from His presence—*He is the God of Heaven who has made the sea and dry land*. If anything, Jonah is fleeing from himself, from the anguished concerns of his own divided soul.

He is the nearest equivalent of what we should choose to describe today as the alienated man. He bears all the psychological wounds of the outsider. He has glimpsed the evil of the established order of society of his own day and is mortified by what he sees. And Nineveh, as the seat of empire, is for him the focal symbol of the corruption of power. His faith in the perfectibility of man is rudely shaken. He sees evil and injustice as part of the human condition. In his despair he seeks to throw off the yoke of responsibility. He looks to escape as a way out of his pre-

dicament, and his flight is not untainted with intimations of a wish to end his own life.

It is not surprising that Jonah, in his anguish, is moved on two occasions to cry out—*take my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live*. And the eagerness with which he embraces the sacrificial rôle to save the storm-tossed vessel—*Take me up and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you*—would seem to underscore this death wish.

Set in this context, the dialogue between God and Jonah now touches off new resonances of meaning. Jonah is not lacking in tenderness or compassion in his reluctance to undertake the mission to Nineveh. The gourd episode clearly shows this.

His is a case of loss of faith. His sombre view of human nature leads him to doubt the redemptive value of repentance. The evil in man will soon enough overwhelm his all too transitory will to goodness. How, then, can an act of contrition be enough to undo the amassed evils of a lifetime? For him there can be no wiping the slate clean—certainly not in respect of Nineveh.

Nineveh, as we shall see, is the focal symbol in the story of Jonah. What Nineveh meant in the mythology of Israel can be understood only by our generation who carry the searing memory of Auschwitz.

The Assyrians were the Nazi stormtroopers of the ancient world. They were a pitiless power-crazed foe. They showed no quarter in battle, uprooting entire peoples in their fury for conquest. They extinguished the northern Kingdom of Israel to leave us only with a tender memory of the yet to be revealed lost ten tribes. For Jonah, Nineveh, then, was no ordinary city; it carried doom-laden, tragic memories; it stood as a symbol of evil incarnate.

Imagine, then, the reaction of a Jonah to the Lord's peremptory call—*Go to Nineveh*. It was as much as asking him to call on Satan to repent.

From an artistic point of view the choice of Nineveh certainly strengthens the dramatic impact of the lesson of God's universal mercy. For Jonah, with his finely pitched sensibilities, his agonized sense of justice, the call to Nineveh destroys his moral equilibrium. He is torn between doing the will of God and his own feelings of protest and of embittered outrage. Nineveh preys upon his mind; it fills his waking thoughts and returns to haunt him in his dream.

And it is in the distorting mirror of dreams that he sees his waking life reflected. Despite his wish to lose himself, to submerge his identity in the waters of oblivion, he finds himself trapped in the slimy maw of Nineveh, now transmogrified through the agency of dream into a monster fish.

In this correspondence between the seemingly wayward images of dream and the stress moments of waking-life which inspire them, names,

especially place names, if they embody visual elements in their roots, can, in the transpositions of dreamlife, find themselves identified through their suggested images. It may well be, then, that Nineveh, as it fixed itself on the mind of Jonah, translated itself into two Hebrew words: *nun*—the fish; *neveh*—the dwelling of, so that Nineveh, in Jonah's dream-language, is graphically represented as "the place of the fish."

This gives a somewhat wry, ironic twist to the story. In his quest to escape the reality of Nineveh, Jonah finds himself caught in his dream-image of Nineveh—"the belly of the fish."

There are other Freudian elements in the story of Jonah that merit exploration. It is not accidental that Jonah turns to the sea as a refuge, as though he is moved by the sub-conscious memory of the comfort that was his as a child in the womb of his mother; that he descends to the darkest corner of the hold of the ship, there to shut himself off in deep sleep from the bustling life around him; that he should welcome the sailors casting him off into the raging sea, so as to free himself of his own guilt-ridden identity.

Again, throughout the story, he is constantly looking for shelter as though he were in desperate need of protection from the despair of existence. It is no wonder that when he is spewed out of the whale onto the dry land, his first act is to build a sukkah, a tabernacle, for cover; that the Lord, in His protective concern for Jonah's bruised personality, should cause a gourd to spring up to provide Jonah with shelter from the sun. Images relating to "escape," "shelter," "protection," "cover," figure throughout the story. They help to create a sense of vulnerable aloneness around Jonah's person; he is the man on his own, a lone voice of protest, the raw nerve of sentient being.

We can now fully appreciate the significance of Jonah's name. Its sombre symbolism impresses itself upon us. The Hebrew roots from which his name is derived seem as though they were meant to sum up the character and life's mission of Jonah. *Jonah ben Amittai*—"Jonah" derives from the Hebrew root signifying "oppress." He is the "oppressed one;" *ben Amittai*—the son of "truth," from the Hebrew root *emet*. In Jonah, then, the troubled conscience of the ancient world finds its lone protesting voice—he is truly a "child of forthrightness."

The Tragedy of Jonah

ABRAHAM D. COHEN

IN ITS INTERPRETATION OF THE BOOK OF JONAH, Biblical exegesis has been confronted with no problem more serious than that of the character of the prophet. As M. Segal points out, in his *Introduction to Scriptures*, the Book of Jonah is unique among the collection of The Twelve Prophets in narrating the account of a prophet's calling rather than recording his prophecies. Within his prophetic episode, Jonah's behavior is enigmatic, and has generated various interpretations which are each tied in with the individual scholar's explanation of the central motif of the book. Often, these interpretations have been projected into Jonah's behavior, rather than allowing the behavior to be comprehended, as much as possible, on its own grounds. In the following discussion this point will be borne out in the examination of five modern interpretations of the book and the man. An alternative explanation of Jonah's predicament will then be offered, which is grounded in the prophet's behavior itself.

Ezekiel Kaufmann, in *The Religion of Israel*, presents the following considerations concerning the Book of Jonah:

It is the classic statement of the Israelite idea of repentance, one of the sublimest creations of the religion of Israel. . . . Paganism knows of expiation, confession, and atonement, but is ignorant of repentance in the Biblical sense: atonement made solely by a change of heart and action . . . the earliest Biblical stories give no place to repentance (284). Jonah is outraged, not because he is a narrow-minded zealot, but because he is a champion of divine justice. He is the voice of the ancient idea that sin must be punished (285).

As the exponent of divine justice, according to Kaufmann, Jonah could, therefore, not accept the idea of repentance.

There are several objections to Kaufmann's interpretation: For one, we have no evidence, at the beginning of the book, that Jonah flees from God, after receiving a terse, one-sentence command, because he is a champion of divine justice. Kaufmann's view apparently involves an inference based on Jonah's major statement in chapter 4, where the prophet states retrospectively, ". . . was this not what I said (i.e. had in mind) when I was still in my own land, and therefore fled to Tarshish; for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and compassionate, long-suffering and abundant in mercy, who repents of the evil." This statement would suggest to Kaufmann that Jonah had anticipated an act of divine mercy which he could not accept because he adhered to the idea of divine justice. However, it is clear that the statement is not one with which Jonah dis-

ABRAHAM D. COHEN is an ordained rabbi and a member of the school psychiatry staff of the Toronto Board of Education.

agrees but, on the contrary, one with which he is in full accord. This, for several reasons: a—This statement, more than the overall Book of Jonah, as Kaufmann would have it, is the classic and ancient Biblical formula asserting God's compassion (Exodus 34:6). b—For Jonah to express the formula in its full and classical form, and then disagree with it, aside from being incompatible with the already known sentiment of Exodus 34, would be tantamount to a moral blasphemy that no prophet could rightfully maintain, and that no Biblical author could possibly ascribe to a Hebrew prophet. c—In fact, there is nothing in Jonah's statement which reflects disagreement with the verse from Exodus. True, Jonah speaks with an air of disappointment, but, as we shall show later, this does not mean that he has rejected the formula and notion of divine mercy. Jonah's disappointment is simultaneous with his acknowledgment of the fact of divine mercy; it does not issue from it. Literarily, the lengthily drawn-out quality of Jonah's statement reads clearly as a statement of agreement. Had Jonah been in disagreement with God's compassion, he would have said something to this effect: "I know, Lord, that you would have mercy on them, but I cannot accept this. . . ." d—Finally, Kaufmann's overall interpretation of the Book of Jonah, based on his consideration of the ideas of divine justice and divine mercy, which necessitates the interpretation that Jonah, in the fourth chapter of the book, is expressing disagreement with Exodus 34, offers no ground for understanding the fundamental question of why Jonah is ready to give up life itself (4:3,8) when his view is contravened. Accepting for the moment Kaufmann's view that the Book of Jonah presents a new view of God's mercy, are we to believe that Jonah could have preferred death, even being the first prophet to declare this sublime "new" conception of divine activity?

Kaufmann's contention that there is no precedent for the idea of divine forgiveness (" . . . the earliest Biblical stories give no place to repentance" 284) is certainly questionable. What does Exodus 34:6 imply, if not that God accepts, and waits for, a change of heart and action in man? But even earlier in the Torah (whose antiquity is no longer questioned by the most critical of Biblical students) we find the theme of repentance implied. In Genesis 4:6 God speaks to Cain: "And the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you distressed, and why is your face fallen? Surely if you do right, there is uplift. . .'" (JPS translation). Whatever linguistic problems are raised by the Hebrew, it is clear that God is calling Cain to change his ways. In the account of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18), the dialogue between Abraham and God proves to Abraham that God acts with complete justice, and that were there the slightest basis for sparing the cities, He would have done so. True, there was no call for the cities to repent; but, certainly, had they repented, it would have been accepted. We are inclined to think, therefore, that Jonah's restatement of Exodus 34:6 declares an acknowledgment of a notion as

old as the Bible itself. Whether the notion runs consistently through the Bible is a valid question that needs to be entertained; but the roots of the idea are more fundamental than Kaufmann would allow.

Where, according to Kaufmann, Jonah is the champion of *divine justice*, Abraham J. Heschel, in his book *The Prophets*, would have it that Jonah is the champion of the unwavering *divine absolute*. In discussing the "contingency of anger" ("... the message of anger includes a call to return and to be saved. The call of anger is a call to cancel anger" 286.) Heschel notes that Jonah "had proclaimed the doom of Nineveh with a certainty, to the point of fixing the time, as an inexorable decree without qualification" (286). Heschel suggests that the "prophet stakes his life on the reliability and infallibility of the word of God" (287). With the cancellation of the decree "the prophet was now alone, angry. . ." (286-7).

Although Heschel is right in observing that Jonah is upset when the decree is lifted, which is obviously a simple fact of the account, he is incorrect in asserting that this lifting itself is the basic cause for Jonah's upset. The first flaw in Heschel's interpretation is that, like Kaufmann's, it starts with the fourth chapter of the book, where, having "found" that Jonah is distressed, supposedly because his belief in the divine absolute is contradicted, it then reads this upset back into Jonah's earlier distress. But consider: If Jonah's prophetic utterance "... Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown" is understood by him as an absolute and unwavering decree, why does he wait anxiously outside of the city for that period of time to see if the *inevitable* will occur? The account clearly suggests that Jonah is waiting to see *if* the "decree" will occur, and that he is not just waiting to revel in the act of destruction. Moreover, if Jonah understands this utterance as an absolute, why does he not understand the original request "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it. . ." also as an absolute, implying the certain doom of Nineveh, in which case, he has no reason to flee? If, on the other hand, the initial command of God is understood as allowing for repentance by the people of Nineveh, and the cancellation of the decree (which it must have, according to Heschel, since Jonah has fled because of it), then the pronouncement which Jonah makes in chapter 4 also contains such a relativistic message, and its cancellation should not have jarred, and so deeply distressed him.

Three further points of criticism, which were raised in regard to Kaufmann's views, apply equally to Heschel's position: a—The idea of the Divine Absolute, as the idea of Divine Justice, is nowhere mentioned or implied in the Book of Jonah. b—Were we to grant that Jonah does maintain such a position, how could a prophet have been so inflexible as to resist a higher and more merciful conception of the Divine? c—

Again, if such a position were held, how could its contradiction lead to a desire for death on the part of the prophet?

In the Introduction to the Soncino Bible's commentary on the Book of Jonah, S. Goldman suggests the following about the overriding lesson of the book.

Nor can it be only the lesson that the Gentiles too are God's creatures, and worthy of pardon if sincerely repentant. Jonah knew and understood that lesson; his very reluctance to deliver his message was based on the fear that the Ninevites might repent, if warned, and be forgiven, and that he would therefore be the agent of their salvation. The essential teaching is that the Gentiles *should not be grudged* God's love, care and forgiveness. It is this grudging which is so superbly rebuked throughout the book, and most of all in the final chapter, which must rightly be considered the climax of the story (137).

Goldman's interpretation, while pointing up one of the motifs in the Book of Jonah, fails in its explanation of Jonah's behavior. For the third time, we ask how an ostensible view or sentiment of the prophet could lead to such a severe personal reaction, involving a desire to die. Furthermore, the particularity of Nineveh in the Book of Jonah is lost in Goldman's generalization concerning all Gentiles.

The three contemporary Jewish interpretations brought so far, while hardly supportive of Jonah, are not severely critical of him; in two instances he is seen as adhering to some unyielding conception of divine activity, while in the third, his error, and apparently his moral fault, lies in not being ready to accept fully God's love for the Gentiles. In non-Jewish exegesis, however, Jonah, the Jewish prophet, is viewed more harshly, and in one instance, that of the Interpreter's Bible, with, perhaps, some degree of antipathy.

Gerhard von Rad, a German Biblical scholar, in his book, *The Message of the Prophets*, offers an interpretation somewhat like that of Goldman. He states, quite validly, that "It is not at once obvious why the story portrays a prophet as the embodiment of such a grudging faith, for the great prophets did try to open their fellow countrymen's eyes to the fact that God's plans embraced the whole world of nations" (257). von Rad finds serious fault in Jonah's character: ". . . the really bad thing about Jonah is his aloofness. This was displayed on board ship, and also before Nineveh: when life and death were at stake, he remained withdrawn, in a very sinister position" (257). Jonah is seen "at his worst when he speaks of his faith in confessional and cultic terms—witness on the one hand when he talks religion in the ship's cabin: 'I am a Hebrew, and fear God, the Lord of Heaven. . . ' and, on the other hand, his words with God about forgiveness" (255-6).

von Rad's latter comment is rather unintelligible. Jonah's response is clearly intended as a remarkable statement of total self-definition; it is the full testimony of a Hebrew prophet who, when asked about his

vocation and national identity, responds in depth-categories concerning that which defines his very being most profoundly: he is a servant of the one and universal God. The essential element of begrudging, in von Rad's explanation, as in the Soncino Bible commentary, can in no way account for Jonah's severe distress, and von Rad's statements concerning Jonah's stubbornness (256), aloofness, and begrudging character, are unfounded, as we will shortly observe in discussing the Interpreter's Bible's views.

In the Interpreter's Bible, a rather severe Christian view of Jonah is offered. According to this interpretation, the Book of Jonah is to expose "in the person of Jonah the absurdity of the attitude which prevailed among so many of his countrymen" (872). This attitude was one of "bitterness and vengefulness towards other lands" (*ibid.*) which arose in Israel after the Exile. The people of Israel had "let hatred of the heathen become so dominant in their thoughts that to be frustrated in the desire for vengeance robbed life of all meaning" (892). This is seen as the meaning of Jonah's request, in ch. 4, that God take his life. Jonah is chosen by the book's author because he was an historical figure, "prophet and advisor to King Jeroboam II, possibly the author of the nationalist expansionist program of that day—and no doubt revered by national expansionists ever since" (876). Jonah is "that narrow little man, that first class national expansionist ('Israel First') who hated all foreigners. . ." (*ibid.*). He is sent on "an errand of warning and mercy" (*ibid.*) which he "stubbornly" refuses to accept. Even his "partial acceptance of it in ch. 3 is so vitiated by the spirit of vengefulness that it can hardly be counted an acceptance at all" (879). "The presence of God is intolerable to him because it demands of him the renunciation of his prejudices and of his lust for a divine vengeance upon Israel's enemies" (880).

This general interpretation makes for good Christian theology. It proposes a severe, late (according to its dating of the book) Biblical indictment of the people of Israel in post-Exilic, and perhaps even pre-Exilic times (888), whose ostensible vengeful nationalistic attitude is rejected by God. This certainly makes for a convenient preamble to the Christian Testament. To its credit, one must point out that it recognizes the importance of the single external reference to Jonah in the Bible (2 Kings 14:25) outside of the Book of Jonah proper. However, the meaning of that statement, which will be dealt with in our interpretation, is misunderstood, if not distorted. Jonah is not described as a secular spokesman for a political expansionist program; he is described as a prophet of God who is entrusted with a bountiful message of enlargement. Neither directly, nor by way of implication, is there any criticism of Jonah as the messenger of that tidings.

The general exposition of the Interpreter's Bible is open to a more

serious objection. This is a consideration of both textual content and tone which, at the same time, represents the main criticism of the views of von Rad and the Soncino Bible. If one examines the Book of Jonah, nowhere is there found a single term denoting begrudging prejudice, vengefulness, or, indeed, as we shall show, anger. All such terms (with the exception of the latter, which will be discussed) are interpolations of the commentators. Whereas in most cases they represent inaccurate interpretations based on Jonah's behavior, in the case of the Interpreter's Bible they are strongly suggestive of some projection of personal attitudes.

Before seeking to resolve the questions raised in regard to these five interpretations of Jonah, and offering an alternative explanation of the prophet's predicament, a general comment on Biblical writings is necessary. Biblical literary technique often limits description in order to call forth reflection, inference, and involvement, while fostering realistic dramatic tensions. The Book of Jonah is a primary example of this approach which, by its very nature, makes possible faulty and interpolative interpretation.

In our interpretation of Jonah we will consider several of the critical junctures in the account. The book begins with God's simple call to Jonah: "Go unto Nineveh the great city and call unto it." This simple phrase obviously means that the prophet is to proclaim that the city will be punished unless its citizenry repent. We have observed that the roots of the idea of repentance are already found in the very beginning of the Bible.

At this point, an important question must be raised beyond our earlier objections to the views of Heschel and Kaufmann. If Jonah is, indeed, the staunch exponent of some theological concept, as Kaufmann and Heschel make him out to be, we would have expected him to state his case and to protest. Instead, in total silence, Jonah absconds from the situation. Certainly, if a theological issue were at stake, nothing less than some statement, some verbalization, would have been warranted. Silence does not declare any such position; what it says is something entirely different.

Moreover, in the early passages of the book, we do not find any of the anger that some interpreters have suggested is there. They have to argue that the anger is pent-up. But there is no basis for that view. The true nature of Jonah's inner feelings will become clear only when we look at the second phase of his "silence" and solitude.

Jonah's flight has drawn the criticism that he thought he could escape from God. Christian commentators, and M. Segal, in his *Introduction to Scriptures*, are comfortable with such an interpretation. If you will, such an explanation skims the surface of the waters into which Jonah descends. With the whole of Biblical thought behind him, how could Jonah have entertained such an idea? In response to the sailors'

query, Jonah himself says, "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land." In tone, and in word, Jonah seems to express here an accepted and common belief of his day. There is no indication that it is something which his present experience has just taught him.

The most plausible explanation of Jonah's behavior, we would suggest, is that Jonah flees—not from God—but from the dreaded prophetic mission which God has set for him. The flight is a desperate and impulsive act, which probably contains the hope that God would at least relieve him of his mission (even, perhaps, if punishing him), and, possibly, transfer it to another prophet.

When he is on the ship to Tarshish, Jonah again acts in "silence" (2:5). The criticism is obvious, as von Rad notes: "When life and death were at stake, he remained withdrawn, in a very sinister position." This behavior, perhaps more than any other in the account, has aroused the *anger of Jonah's critics*. But the criticism of Jonah, in this instance, is based on a common and total misunderstanding of his behavior. It is generally supposed that Jonah's descent into the bottom of the ship is a voluntary act of withdrawal, reflecting his indifference to the welfare of the people on board ship. Such an explanation leaves us with a paradox; if Jonah is the wilful, self-centered and, perhaps, arrogant individual he has been made out to be, how can he not be concerned about his own welfare? Why does he not try to save himself? This question, which in itself invalidates the views of Jonah's critics, demands a new perspective of Jonah's action. Jonah is not indifferent to others, any more than he is *consciously* "indifferent" to himself. Rather, Jonah's behavior represents a clear clinical picture of despair and, more fundamentally, of depression. His "descent" into the bottom of the ship symbolically conveys this mood. But even more, his passivity, his withdrawal, his lack of communication, his silence, and his oblivion to his own fate—containing a wish for death—are classical manifestations of deep depression. We are not dealing here with any conscious wilful act but, rather, with a mode of behavior in which an unconscious syndrome has overtaken the individual. Obviously, we can blame Jonah no more than we can blame any individual in the throes of some psychiatric depression.¹

This interpretation, as will be shown, has further support. Here, however, it should be observed that this second act of silence reflects

1. A psychoanalytic explanation of the Book of Jonah was offered by an Israeli psychiatrist in the spring '70 edition of *American Imago* ("The Prophet Jonah: The Story of an Intrapsychic Process" by Dr. Joseph More). Notwithstanding some isolated points worthy of some consideration, the overall treatment impresses us as a failure in both Biblical and legitimate psychoanalytic interpretation. The exaggerated treatment of symbolism (to the point of *creating* symbols that are not there) is fundamentalistic and frankly, touches on the absurd. All reality is reduced to the level of fantasy expression. In that case, we must conclude and, perhaps with justice, that this interpretation is, similarly, an expression of its author's fantasy.

back on the original silence when Jonah flees, and it informs us that, at the time, Jonah is not a wilful, oppositional individual, but a despondent and despairing human being.

(The question arises whether Jonah's despondency runs straight through the account, and to what extent it affects his general functioning. It would appear that while he remains despondent throughout, there are moments when he emerges, in part, from the disabling effects of this disturbance, and is able to marshal his energies to a given situation. So, for example, when Jonah makes his proclamation to the people of Nineveh, it is probably in a somewhat improved emotional state.)

Jonah's depression is decisively supported by one crucial word in the book which has been almost universally misunderstood. The word *harah* appears four times in ch. 4 and, when understood as "anger," which is what it almost invariably means in the Bible, is read back into the previous account to support the view that Jonah is hateful, unsympathetic, and begrudging in his attitude towards the Ninevites.

Notwithstanding this general meaning of the word *harah*, there is clear precedent for its denoting not anger, but despondency. Thus, e.g., in Gen. 4:6 "And the Lord said unto Cain, why are you distressed (*lamah harah lakh*) and why is your face fallen?" Interestingly, the synonym of *harah*, *ka-as*, also has the dual meaning of anger and despondency. Thus, e.g., in Psalms 31:10, in Eccl. 1:18 and 7:3, *ka-as* is understood by all as despondency.

The dual meaning of these words is not fortuitous. It indicates that in Biblical times there was an intuition of an important finding of modern dynamic psychology, that depression involves, or resembles, anger turned inwardly, against oneself. It was not beyond Biblical man to make such an observation. (In Jonah's case, this does not mean that he is angry at others, and then turns this feeling inwardly, but, rather, that something creates a mood of inner anger and hurtfulness in him, that is directed, self-destructively, against himself.)

In rendering *harah* as depression, ch. 4 reads with a clarity that is not achieved when the word is understood as anger. Consider the first sentence in the chapter, where the word appears initially, together with the following verses:

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry (*va-yihar lo*). And he prayed unto the Lord and said: "I pray Thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in mine own country? Therefore I fled beforehand unto Tarshish; for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy, and repentest Thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

When *harah* is rendered as anger, the reading of these verses is disjointed; there is no psychological continuity, and no literary one, between the feeling of anger, the enunciation of a *positive* formula of God's

compassion, and the wish to die, that are found in the three respective verses. However, in defining *harah* as dejection, we find that both verses 1 and 3 speak of the same state of despondency, and the three verses read with ease. While God's compassion, in itself, (v. 2) can not possibly be the cause of this feeling, we are led to understand that some extension of it is. That extension is not defined in these verses, but we think tht it is clearly indicated by the overall account. Therefore, not God's compassion itself, but some extension of His compassion, is the cause for Jonah's distress.

In the three other instances in which the word *harah* appears, it is also best rendered as depression. The reasons for this are: a—The depression we have already established. b—The meaning of the word in v. 1. c—The clear depressive mood that pervades ch. 4, in which, exclusively, the words appear. Twice in this chapter (verses 3 and 8) Jonah expresses the wish to die. Beyond this, the chapter is filled with an air of anguish, mood-swings, and degeneration bordering on death.

In view of the rendering of *harah* as depression in these instances, we would suggest that the phrase *ad maves* (v. 9, literally, "unto death") which was an ancient way of expressing excess, is intended by Jonah in a more literal sense. God has already asked Jonah if he is greatly distressed (*ha-hetiv harah lekha*) and Jonah could have responded, *hetiv harah li*; however, he adds the further qualification of *ad maves*, which approximates his general mood in this chapter.

Knowing of Jonah's distress, we are still not sure of its roots; again, this question is built into the very fabric of the account, and demands our resolution. Perhaps special attention should be given to the fourth chapter of the book, which has baffled many commentators, who see in it some particular symbolism. Can the deciphering of Jonah's dilemma lie in the decoding of this chapter? Actually, we are inclined to think that the basic elements in the chapter allow for a much simpler explanation than is generally supposed. After Jonah sees that God has forgiven the people of Nineveh (end of ch. 3), he asks that God take his life. God does not accede to Jonah's request, asking him again whether he is greatly, and perhaps justifiably, distressed (4:4). Jonah, still in the throes of his torment, chooses to go out of the city and to await the passing of the original 40 day period which he has announced, thinking, or feeling, we can assume, that some change in the situation—perhaps a reverting to old ways by the Ninevites—will bring a change in God's decision to forgive the city. He prepares a booth to seek some comfort from the heat (symbolically: no less inner than outer) during his vigil. God, wanting to impress upon Jonah the human pathos involved in the destruction of the city (4:11) replaces the booth with an organic living object, which Jonah, in his distress, might psychologically identify with, and feel compassion for. The swift killing of the plant, by no more than a worm, is

to symbolize for Jonah the absurdity and moral unacceptability of destroying an entire city of human beings and animals when the former repent of their ways. The death of the plant, symbolically, may also reflect the final blow to Jonah: the death of his last hope, and possible comfort, that the city will not be spared.

This chapter does appear to lack compassion for the prophet, and there is some sense of indictment against him. But, in fact, we may simply be reading an account in which there is no solace for a tragic prophet, whose position (not whose person) on behalf of his people no longer is acceptable. The Book of Jonah ends without a resolution of the prophet's anguish, for, as we shall see, there is no resolution for it.

Fully to appreciate Jonah's predicament, we have to look at the only two Biblical references which identify him in some manner; one is the opening verse of the book, and the other consists of the several verses in 2 Kings 14. The opening verse of Jonah contains two elements worthy of attention. The first of these is the apparent presupposition of the reader's acquaintance with Jonah. The second element is the mention of Nineveh as the city which Jonah is to call to repent. According to Kaufmann:

The Nineveh of the Book of Jonah is not the capital of a great pagan empire; its king is not the ruler of Assyria, but the "king of Nineveh;" its sin is not the oppression and enslavement of Israel or any other land, but the "violence" of its citizens, reminiscent of the sin of Sodom. Is it likely that to a Jewish author of late times Nineveh could have become so remote and unreal that he no longer was aware even that it was the capital of the empire which enslaved and destroyed Israel (828).

This explanation serves as the basis of Kaufmann's view that the Book of Jonah predates Assyria's attack on Israel. Unfortunately, even for someone seeking such evidence, the argument is weak. All that the opening verse intends to tell us is that it is talking about a period preceding Assyria's rise to power and its confrontation with Israel. Such a verse could have been written later with the intention of pointing up a greater state of "righteousness" that might have prevailed in Assyria before the onslaught against Israel. Furthermore, we ask, if Kaufmann finds it unthinkable that a later day author could have mentioned Nineveh in such a curt manner, is it not more unthinkable that a modern day scholar such as he could consider it tantamount to a coincidence that Israel's great arch-enemy is used to illustrate some point of general application to the non-Jewish world?² Such a coincidence is even harder to accept when one recognizes, by way of contrast, the significant relationship between Assyria, the abhorred destroyer of the ten tribes of Israel, and Assyria-Nineveh, the contrite nation, whose reprieve from punishment is an illustration of God's mercy to all nations.

2. No dating of the book is intended in these remarks, which are directed only at Kaufmann's attempt to isolate Nineveh from Assyria.

The presupposition of the reader's acquaintance with Jonah, in v. 1, appears to point clearly in the direction of 2 Kings 14:23-27.

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah . . . king of Judah . . . Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel began to rule in Samaria. . . . And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. . . . He restored the border of Israel . . . according to the word of the Lord God of Israel which He spoke by the hand of His servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher. For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter. . . . And the Lord said not that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven; but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

These verses inform us that Jonah prophesied in the time of King Jeroboam II, during whose reign Israel's borders were restored to Solomonic proportions. The restoration of these borders was prophesied by Jonah. It was to offer new opportunities and new hope, to uplift the downtrodden of Israel. Moreover, it represented, apparently, the last stage before God *would* consider the destruction of the ten tribes. Until then, "God did not yet consider" (or decide: literally, "speak of") destroying Israel (v. 27).

These passages allow us to see Jonah's initial dilemma. He is aware of the severe injustice in Jeroboam's kingdom, and yet he is to offer a great prophecy of God's bountifulness and forgiveness towards the people of Israel and its king. But, as a prophet, Jonah must have already known that though God has not "spoken of" destroying Israel, it is something he might consider were this act of bountifulness not to bear fruits. Amos, Jonah's contemporary, is already declaring "The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall rise no more . . ." (Amos 5:2). In his own right, and perhaps as a contemporary of Amos and Hosea, Jonah, the harbinger of hope and salvation, knows of the possible calamity that may follow. Already he must have experienced the anguish that comes when hope and despair simultaneously rack the soul. We can see him wondering, again and again, questioning, hoping, and doubting, whether his is a prophecy of salvation, or the ephemeral flash of light before the storm of destruction. Would he be known to future generations as the prophet of a tragically futile hope?

When Jonah is granted a second prophecy to call the people of Nineveh to repent (repentance having been implied in his prophecy to the people of Israel) we can assume that he may have already known that the possible nemesis of Israel could be Assyria. It is not important whether he knows that the calamity is sure to befall Israel; it is sufficient that, sometime after his prophecy of hope, he comes to realize that Israel has not repented, and that the possibility of destruction is all too real. Therefore, when Jonah is called to ask the people of Nineveh to repent and be saved from destruction, his own tragic fate is all too clear. Is he to become an even more tragic figure, whose prophecy of great

bounty is to perish, whose call to his people to repent is rejected, while a similar call to a nation that might serve to destroy Israel, itself, is heeded? This is the twofold tragedy of Jonah. Given this tragic fate, he falls into despair and into solitude. He flees from a prophecy which he can not bear. Perhaps his depression is a self-destructive measure meant to free him (by punishing himself) from any blame he might have thought himself guilty of, a blame that does not exist. Secondarily, the depression expresses the sense of loss and despair that issues from Jonah's tragic and, perhaps unparalleled, prophetic role.

We are now in a position to understand fully, and feel with, this tragic man, Jonah, and we can absolve him from the conjectures of negative attitudes that have been ascribed to him. He never pretends to flee from God; he does attempt, in utter and impulsive desperation, to escape from the tragic mission which God has set for him. If the idea of divine mercy is a key concept in the Book of Jonah, Jonah himself can, and does, maintain it. If the rejection of an inflexible concept of the divine has basis in the account of Jonah, Jonah may have been the first to reject such inflexibility. If the idea of God's compassion for all men is central to the Book of Jonah, as it is, Jonah could have subscribed to it, and we have no reason to believe that he does not. God's unlimited mercy is, indeed, the paramount message of the Book of Jonah, and is expressed, notwithstanding the torment that one noble man has to suffer (Jonah the single man, the single "gourd") because his people may not repent.

More than anything, the Book of Jonah teaches us that when God is already considering the destruction of the ten tribes, something which critics would view in categories of vengeance and rage, even then, He is still "compassionate, long-suffering, and abundant in mercy" towards all men, and has sent forth, through Jonah, a message to Israel to repent, and who has gone to all limits to show that He "repents of the evil."

Laughter in Biblical and Rabbinic Literature

CHAIM W. REINES

LAUGHTER IS ONE OF THE DISTINCTIVE MARKS OF man (since animals do not laugh) and, at the same time, it is one of his enigmatic features. Ever since antiquity there have been various theories proposed about the nature of laughter. Observation shows that people laugh at widely disparate occasions such as joy, relief or embarrassment, and most competent writers on the subject agree that laughter signifies, originally, pleasure, relaxation and a playful state of mind. Its biological function seems to be to relax the individual from the steady strain and tension of ordinary life and occurs at such situations when a serious response is not warranted or not desired. Since laughter may be provoked by various situations, it has acquired a quasi-objective meaning, to signify the states of mind which are associated with those situations. (In the Biblical sources, as we shall see later, the term *z'hok* is often used to designate the mental states which are associated with laughter.) At the same time, laughter acquired a social meaning, since people usually laugh in company, and laughter thus signifies and establishes sympathy (in the sense of sharing the same feeling) and solidarity between them. However, while being one of the foremost expressions of the so-called herd instinct, laughter is also sometimes quite callous.

Biblical and rabbinic literature, which generally reveal a fine psychological understanding, also reveal the general character and the various nuances of laughter. The Hebrew language is, in this instance, very instructive, as the same root (*z h k*) signifies laughter, joy and play, and, thus, it indicates the connection among these three. The term is used in the sources for the various mental states which are accompanied by laughter. In the following pages we will consider the various kinds of laughter which are mentioned in Biblical and rabbinic literature.

The Laughter of Joy

In Psalms (126:2), it is said that when the Lord will return the exultants of Zion "our mouth will be full of laughter and our tongue of song." Laughter and song are, thus, the expression of joy. It is probable that laughter is here mentioned because, as stated, the deliverance from the exile came so suddenly that it seemed like a dream. Also, in other cases, the term laughter (*z'hok*) signifies, according to the context, joy

CHAIM W. REINES is the author of a forthcoming work on Jewish ethics and law, and a frequent contributor to JUDAISM.

which finds its expression in laughter. Thus, in the words of Sarah (Genesis 21:6) "God has made laughter for me, every one who hears it will laugh (will be joyous) concerning me." In this case, joy is expressed by laughter because the event of bearing of a child by an old woman is so unusual and, also, so amusing.

The Laughter of Intellectual Enjoyment

Laughter, which generally expresses pleasure, occurs at an easy, playful engagement of the intellect. One aggadic passage¹ notes the difference in the expression on the face when teaching Bible, Mishnah or delivering an aggadic sermon. In teaching the Bible in the elementary school, the teacher displays a stern face in order to inspire awe before the word of the Lord and, also, respect for his person. In teaching Mishnah and Talmud the teacher displays a friendly but serious face, since this subject requires considerable mental strain. But when delivering an aggadic sermon before the assembly of laymen the speaker displays a smiling face because the material of the aggadah is not of such a serious character as the halakhah and is based, to a considerable extent, on word plays and similar homiletic devices, and generally gives free rein to the imagination.²

The Laughter of Confidence

The term laughter (smile) is also used in the Bible to express confidence and the absence of fear in the face of an impending event.³ One Talmudic passage says that if one dies with a smile it is a good sign for him, but if one dies weeping it is a bad one.⁴ The meaning of this statement is that he who dies with a smile shows confidence that he has led a blameless life and has nothing to fear of the coming judgment, while the opposite is the case with the one who dies weeping. A curious story is told⁵ that Rabbi Akiba, Rabbi Gamliel, Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Eliezer once walked in the ruins of the temple and saw a fox there. While his colleagues broke out in tears at this tragic sight, Rabbi Akiba laughed. When they expressed their astonishment about this inappropriate laughter, Rabbi Akiba explained that just as there had been fulfillment of the gloomy forecast of the prophets that the mountain of the temple would be converted to forest-covered high places,⁶ so also would there be the

1. *Tanḥuma*, edit. Buber, *Yitro* 17: *Peskita Rabbati*, edit. Friedman, p. 101.

2. The aggadah even sometimes contains witticisms (J. Heinemann, *Darkhei Haagadah* 190, 191). In order to catch the attention of the audience the speaker sometimes had recourse to audacious statements about some extravagant events, which aroused laughter (Genesis *Rabbah* 30:9).

3. Proverbs 31:25; Job 5:22, 39:22.

4. *Ketubot* 103b.

5. *Makkot* 24.

6. Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 3:12; Isaiah 2:1; Micah 4:2.

fulfillment of the forecast about the future glory of the temple.⁷ The laughter of Rabbi Akiba thus signified his faith in the promises of the prophets in spite of the present plight of the nation.⁸

The Laughter of Sympathy

Laughter (a smile) also signifies friendliness, good will, or intimacy. Job, recalling his former grandeur, says that when he smiled at people they refused to believe it (29:24). Modern commentators find this statement exaggerated and have proposed to amend the text. However, the Masoretic text is correct and its meaning is quite clear. Job, as he tells, had had a high rank in society and people had great reverence for him, so that old people stood before him and the young dared not approach him (29:8). In ancient society, the social distance between the different ranks was more emphasized than it is in modern democratic society; consequently, it was not considered proper for a man of such a high rank to smile at common people, since a smile signifies too much intimacy. But Job, being a man of great kindness (29:12), had a smile for everyone. The rabbis appreciated the ethical meaning of a smile which signifies friendliness,⁹ sympathy, consolation. Rabbi Yoḥanan said, therefore, that a smile is worth more than a gift of milk.¹⁰ This statement means that what matters is not the material gift, as such, but the showing of sympathy and understanding, since an individual in distress needs sympathy and consolation more than anything else.¹¹

The Laughter of Mocking an Opponent

A frequent cause of laughter (which is ethically not irreproachable) is the wish to outwit a hard opponent by using some cunning device, like a legal trick, to defeat him. The laughter caused in this case derives from the pleasure taken in the trick used to achieve the victory. Such an instance is found in the halakhah. When a woman demanded of her husband that he give her a divorce and he was unwilling to grant it, he devised the trick of ordering that the document of divorce be written, but failed to add that it should be given to her. The Mishnah says, therefore, that he just "made fun of her" and that the divorce is not valid.¹²

7. This consideration explains why this prophecy was placed in the book of Micah immediately after the first.

8. A similar story is also found in *Yoma* 38a; *Shekalim* 9a.

9. According to some scholars (M. Noth, *Israelitische Personennamen* 20) the name *Yizhak* (he will smile) signifies (assuming that the subject is God) that the Lord will be friendly to the newborn child (cf. Numbers 6:24-5). However, according to another opinion, this name signifies that the child will be happy. (A smile symbolizes happiness.)

10. *Ketubot*, 111b.

11. Similarly, it was said (*Baba Batra* 9b), that consoling a poor man with words is worth more than giving him alms.

12. Mishnah *Gittin* VI, 6.

In another case, a woman, in entering on (presumably a second) marriage and in order to prevent the man from getting rights over her possessions, sometimes used the trick of bequeathing them to another man, though it was tacitly understood that this gift was only a sham one. According to one opinion, the deed was, nonetheless, valid and the recipient might "make fun of her" because she had failed to add the stipulation that she could withdraw it at will. The laughter in this case is caused by the fact that, by some formal omission of the donor, the recipient succeeded in getting hold of her possessions against her real intent. However, this opinion is contested by other rabbis.¹³

The Laughter of Contempt; Derision

Laughter sometimes expresses contempt, since it signifies that the individual arouses only amusement and is not to be feared. Thus, in the Biblical narrative about the accusation framed against Joseph by the wife of his master, Potifar, she is represented as saying "he (her husband) brought here a Hebrew man to mock us." (Genesis 39:14) She meant to say that because Joseph succeeded in gaining the trust of his master he became so arrogant that he allowed himself to make advances to the lady of the house.¹⁴

In Psalms 2:4, it is said that the Lord "laughs and mocks" at the kings who plot against Him and His messiah. These words mean that He scorns them because, in spite of their arrogance, they are really impotent against Him.¹⁵ The aggadah also depicts the actual mocking of tyrants. Thus it says that when Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh to show him, by miracles, the power of the God of Israel, he complained that they were mocking him (meaning scorning him).¹⁶ The aggadah, which apparently has in mind the conditions of its time (under Roman rule) wished to indicate here that the oppressed and persecuted Jews had only scorn for their oppressors, since they were confident they would overcome tyrants. The Biblical narrative says that, after the last plague, Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron to tell them that he was prepared to let the Israelites leave the country. The aggadah, wishing to stress Pharaoh's humiliation, presents him as running in panic through the streets and asking the people the whereabouts of Moses and Aaron. The chil-

13. *Ketubot* 79a; *Tosefta* ibid IX, 2.

14. She called Joseph a "Hebrew slave" because the Hebrews, (a class of Semitic migrants) were despised and, at the same time, feared by Egyptians (cf. Genesis 43:32. Exodus 1:10). Gunkel (commentary to Genesis) quite correctly remarks that she injected a bit of anti-Semitism.

15. In Isaiah 37:22 "mocking" (*laag*) is mentioned in parallelism with "contempt" (*booz*). In Job 11:3; 34:7 the term, "mocking," (*laag*) is apparently used in the sense of contempt.

16. *Exodus Rabbah* IX, 4; *Tanhuma*, edit. Buber, Bo 12.

dren of the Israelites mocked him and said, "Where are you going, Pharaoh?"¹⁷

Zedekiah, who was named by Nebuchadnezzar as the king of Judea and pledged loyalty to him, broke his word and plotted against him. (He was apparently in liaison with the neighboring kings who thought the time appropriate to rise against their conqueror.) Both the prophet Ezekiel and the writer of Chronicles, therefore, strongly censored Zedekiah for breaking his oath.¹⁸ However, the aggadah has a psychological explanation for this action of Zedekiah, and says that, once, when he came to Nebuchadnezzar to pay tribute, he was invited to dinner. Observing the King at the dinner, Zedekiah concluded that the great conqueror and tyrant actually was an insignificant little man with bad table manners. Therefore, when he returned home he mocked him, whereupon the vassals of Nebuchadnezzar said to him "Zedekiah is mocking you."¹⁹

Great men in history were often misunderstood, persecuted and derided by their contemporaries. The prophets of Israel may serve as an illustration of this fact. The prophet was a "man of the spirit" who was completely absorbed in the grim message he received from the Lord and was always gloomy.²⁰ He further annoyed and angered the people by his constant moral admonitions and forecasts of the coming judgment. Consequently, vulgar people who could not understand either his personality or his message considered him "mad"²¹ and derided him. Jeremiah, who more than any other prophet suffered from this attitude, complained bitterly that all the people cursed him and mocked him, and he took his tragic fate so much to heart that he cursed the day that he was born (20:7, 14). Similarities with the words of Jeremiah are found in some Psalms (22:6-8) where the singer who hints that he is persecuted by his foes complains that people shake their heads over him, mock him and say ironically, "let the Lord help him." It is difficult to define the specific situation which may be referred to in these Psalms which complain about persecution, shame and derision, since the description is in vague poetic terms. For the most part, these Psalms probably do not refer to all to any specific historic cases, but are based on pure poetic fiction. Apparently, however, they have in mind the type of pious, humble people (the *anavim*), as represented by the prophets and their followers, who were persecuted and mocked. In another Psalm, (69:8-12), the singer complains that he is mocked because he mourns for the temple.²² He

17. *Tanḥuma*, Buber, *Bo* 19.

18. Ezekiel 17:16; II Chronicles 36:13.

19. *Tanḥuma*, edit. Buber, *Vajera* 18.

20. Cf. Jeremiah 15:17.

21. Hosea 9:7. In antiquity, madness was attributed to obsession by a spirit. Consequently, the prophet was also viewed as "mad" (cf. Jeremiah 29:26). However, the people referred to here obviously did not believe at all in the prophet's inspiration and message, and considered him literally "mad."

22. Cf. Lamentations 3:14.

apparently belonged to the so-called "mourners for Zion."²³ The aggadah also states that the messiah, before his appearance, is derided by the sinners of Israel.²⁴

The Ethics of Laughter

Since laughter expresses a certain mental attitude it must stand before the forum of ethics. Apart from the strictly ascetic view, there is no reason for a general condemnation of laughter, insofar as it expresses joy and relaxation.²⁵ However, some kinds of laughter (as mentioned above) are of a malicious nature and must be morally condemned. Besides, excessive laughter hinders the concentration of thought, diverts from the serious tasks of life and leads to frivolity and mischievous pranks. It may be compared, therefore, in this aspect, with alcohol and drug addiction, which intoxicate and produce a state of euphoria. Violent laughter which throws the individual into convulsions (which is found in hysteria) is not in accord with human dignity and is also aesthetically repugnant. Children and primitives laugh constantly and violently, but the civilized man laughs moderately at certain proper occasions and is careful thereby not to offend the feelings of his fellows. These considerations explain the critical attitude to laughter which is apparent in Biblical and rabbinic literature.

Kohleleth is the oldest Jewish thinker (apart from some casual references in Proverbs) who devoted attention to laughter from an ethical viewpoint, and his views on the subject show similarity with those of the rabbis. He says, "of laughter I said it is foolish and of merriment what is it for" (2:2). These words refer to frivolous laughter and merriment which lack any sense. In another place he says that "the laughter of the fools is like the crackling of the thorns under a pot," (7:6) referring here to the violent and aesthetically repulsive laughter of inferior individuals.²⁶ He also observed that "better sorrow than laughter for with a

23. Cf. Isaiah 61:3. Also in Pesikta *Rabbati* (edit. Friedman p. 159a) there is a reference to the humble mourners for Zion who are insulted and do not retort. Cf. further the statement about the "servant of the Lord" (Isaiah 53:3) "despised and removed from human company." (See J. Kaufmann *Toldot Emunat Israel* IV, 130.)

24. *Pesikta Rabbati* 159b. This statement probably has in mind the type of people, usually designated as *apikorsim*, who derided the messianic visions of the aggadah (cf. *Baba Batra*, 75a).

25. Spinoza (*Ethica* IV, 45), who apparently polemicized against the medieval condemnation of laughter on ascetic grounds, remarks that laughter (as distinguished from mockery) signifies joy, and that no god can demand from man to be gloomy since joy signifies a higher state of the mind. He adds, however, "provided it is not excessive." Also, the Arabic philosopher, Gazali (*Moznai Zedek* edit. Goldenthal p. 108) says that there is no objection to laughter which serves the purpose of relaxation in company, provided it is free from maliciousness. Gazali was apparently influenced by Aristotle (*Ethica Nicomachea* IV 1128) who makes the same statements about jesting.

26. Ben Sira (The Hebrew *Ben Sira*, edit. Segal, 19:26) observes that the character of man is revealed by his laughter. Cf., *Eruvin* 65b.

sad countenance there is improvement of the mind" (7:3).²⁷ Koheleth certainly does not generally recommend sadness, since, quite on the contrary, he recommends joy, but he means that sometimes (as in moral admonition) a sad face is more appropriate than laughter. In another place he says "there is a time for weeping and a time for joy." In accordance with his sound view of life, Koheleth does not repudiate laughter entirely but holds that it should be kept within bounds as the natural expression of joy at proper times and occasions. Excessive laughter is a sign of frivolity and spiritual emptiness.

Rabbi Akiba said that laughter and frivolity lead to licentiousness.²⁸ Also, at the so-called ordeal of bitter water for the woman suspected of adultery, she was told (in order to soften her and make her confess) that her sin was caused (not only by youthful age and bad company) by "laughter and frivolity."²⁹ One late midrash says that laughter and frivolity may lead also to other grave sins, such as murder, deception, stealing.³⁰ The Rabbis held that the holy spirit (*Shekhinah*) rests neither in a state of sadness nor of laughter and frivolity, but in a state of joy which is bound with the fulfillment of a *mizvah* (meaning, generally, religious devotion).³¹ One source which describes the way of life which is necessary for the student of the Torah, states that he should indulge only in a "minimum of laughter" (*miut zehok*).³² It should be noted that this source does not absolutely repudiate laughter but only excessive laughter. Rabbi Simon ben Yoḥai said that in his time (after the destruction of the Temple) one should not indulge in joyous laughter, since it is stated that when the Lord delivers Israel our mouth will be full of laughter.³³ It is apparent, from this motivation, that Rabbi Simon ben Yoḥai did not generally repudiate laughter as an expression of joy on ascetic grounds, but held that it was not appropriate at the time since one should mourn for Zion. This view was the result of the tendency which developed then to forego excessive joy as a sign of mourning for Zion.³⁴

27. The term *ka'as* in this passage does not mean "anger," but "sorrow," "vexation." By *lev* is meant the moral consciousness.

28. *Avot* III, 13.

29. Mishnah *Sotah* I, 4. In *Tanḥuma* (edit. Buber, *Naso* V) it is stated that the woman should not be abducted to laughter. In *Ketubot*, 72b, there is a reference (among the women who may be divorced without the payment of the Ketubah) to "the one who laughs (makes fun) with the young men." The term *mesaheket* could also be translated as "playing" (meaning sexplay, cf. Genesis 26:8). However, the context shows that it is generally meant laughing, making fun. See *Shitah M'kubetzet*, *ad loci*.

30. *Seder Eliahu Rabbah* (edit. Friedman), ch. XIV p. 64. Cf., also Code of Maimonides, *Deot* VII, 4 about the one who slanders by way of laughter and frivolity.

31. *Shabbat* 30b. Cf., Rashi *ibid.*, sub *zehok*. Maimonides (*Deot* IV, 7) apparently thinks that joy is the middle way between sadness and frivolity.

32. *Avot* VI, 5.

33. *Berakhot*, 31a.

34. Cf., *Baba Batra* 60b. See the essay of Orbach in *Sefer Hajoel Beer*, p. 55. See also note 23.

In fact, however, the masses were at the time quite inclined to merriment. Especially at weddings there used to be much merriment and even some of the younger scholars participated in it, though the rigorists among the rabbis objected. When Rabbi Ashi saw that at the wedding of his son the young scholars become too merry, he broke a glass in order to induce them to sadness.³⁵ The patriarch, Rabbi Judah Hanassi, once declined to invite Bar Kappara, one of the greatest scholars of his entourage, to the wedding of his son because Bar Kappara had the habit of getting merry and speaking jests at weddings. The Talmud explains that when the patriarch smiles there may be a disaster.³⁶ However, when Abbaye was once reproached by his teacher, Rabba, for becoming a little merry, he replied, "I am observing the rite of tefillin,"³⁷ meaning that for a man of his caliber there is no ground for the apprehension that he might get frivolous. In fact, in spite of their denunciation of "laughter and frivolity," the rabbis appreciated the healthy psychological effect of laughter. The aggadah states that Elijah praised two simple men because by their jests they made sad people merry and succeeded in stopping feuds.³⁸

35. *Berakhot*, 31a.

36. *Nedarim*, 50b. Some primitive people believe that one should abstain from laughter at initiation ceremonies and hunting because it may cause bad luck (Piddington, *Psychology of Laughter*, p. 135).

37. *Berakhot* 30b.

38. *Taanit* 22a.

SOCIETY OF FRIENDS OF JUDAISM

We record with thanks the names of the following who have contributed to the Society of Friends of JUDAISM and have helped to assure the continued publication of our Journal.

Additional names of Friends will appear in subsequent issues.

FRIENDS

Leo and Freda Pfeffer

Congregation Mishkan Tefila, Newton, Mass.; Rabbi Israel Kazis

Rabbis and Jewish Clergy in the USSR: 1917-1970

ARYEH Y. YODFAT

IN SOVIET RUSSIA, RABBIS AND PRIESTS WERE considered to be servants of the old regime and as remnants of it to which the new regime aimed to bring an end. The Constitution, adopted in July, 1918, limited the election rights of clergymen, and said (par. 65) that "monks and spiritual servants of the church and of other religious faiths" could not vote or be elected in Soviets, local and central.¹ Clergymen, who included beadles, cantors and ritual slaughterers, were thus included in the category of those deprived of voting rights (*lishentsy*), as were former landowners, industrialists, "bourgeois elements" and those who had served the Tsarist regime. "Deprived" people could not be members of trade unions, nor work in most government offices, nor be teachers. They did not receive food rationing cards and their sons were not accepted as students in higher educational institutions.

This separation of church from state did not directly influence the situation of rabbis who had not been receiving any government subsidies and whose income had come from the indirect taxes and donations of their followers. As for the "official" (*kazyonny*) rabbis who had dealt with registrations of the civil status and had to see that Jews kept the state laws, their function was abolished, with no regret from the Jewish population upon whom they had been forced by the Tsarist administration.

The new Soviet laws forbade religious organizations to take upon themselves judicial or legal public functions,² so that rabbis could no longer arbitrate between people who asked them to do so, since that would mean infringing upon the rights of "judicial bodies." Their dealing with civilian status matters, such as marriages or divorces, had a non-binding character before the law, and the documents which they issued had no legal force and were not taken into consideration by the government authorities.³

Rabbis were sometimes accused of leading in anti-Soviet propaganda, but, more often, of teaching religious studies to minors. Some of them

1. *Izvestia*, July 19, 1918.

2. Par. 2 of the June 1922 Criminal Code; RSFSR, *Sobraniye Uzakoneniya*, No. 15, June 1, 1922, p. 221.

3. A circular of the Commissariat of Interior of Nov. 18, 1920. P. B. Gidulyanov, *Otdeleniye Tserkviy ot Gosundarstva v. SSSR* (The Separation of Church from State in the USSR), (Moscow, 1926 ed.), pp. 395, 483.

ARYEH Y. YODFAT, of the Tel Aviv University, has written extensively on the USSR and on Middle Eastern affairs.

were sentenced to prison, but as they were primarily old people, only a few were actually arrested, and then only for short periods. Generally, rabbis tried not to be involved in politics and the Soviet regime had no intention, in times of a civil war, to add orthodox Jews to the long list of its enemies.

The end of the civil war and the proclamation of a New Economic Policy (NEP) brought a somewhat more liberal attitude to religion, but the situation of rabbis continued to be difficult, not because of direct persecutions, but because of their being included in the afore-mentioned category of those "deprived." They could not change their legal status, even if they became workers, if they continued to serve as rabbis or priests in their free time. Clergymen who severed all relations with their former occupation received full civil rights only after they were engaged in work which was "productive and useful to the public" for at least five years and thus proved their loyalty to the Soviet regime.⁴

In the past, there had been no city, or even small town, in which Jews lived, without at least one rabbi, and in Moscow, in early 1923, there were still about 50 or 60 of them.⁵ In those small towns, populated mainly by Jews, the circumstances often remained not much different from what they had been before the Communists came to power, for in such places there were just a few Communists, all of whom held official positions and were regarded by the local population as outsiders. Here the rabbi had a great authority, was considered the spiritual leader and, often, also the head of the community. But, still, the situation of many rabbis was not easy. There were many small communities which had great difficulties in paying fees to them. Indirect services diminished, and as the economic plight of the Jews became worse, the payments for such services became even smaller, so that many rabbis lived close to starvation. Many of them turned to those-still-permitted private trades, industry or crafts, while others went to the big cities in which the economic situation was much better.

A private letter of 1925 states that in Kiev, and in many other cities of the former Jewish Pale of Settlement, there were many "wandering rabbis" who had had to leave the small towns which had been destroyed.

Their situation has become so bad lately that they simply die from hunger. . . . The communities in the great cities cannot help them with even one *kopeyka*. Their local rabbis also ask for support and are not answered. Synagogues are going to be closed because there is nothing with which to pay the rent. . . . The income of rabbis from marriages and divorces has stopped entirely because the way of life in matrimonial matters has changed here. Rabbis here are literally doomed to starvation, as in the time of the great hunger in 1921.⁶

4. *Izvestia*, Nov. 15, 1926. RSFSR, *Sobraniye Uzakoneniya*, No. 75, Nov. 28, 1926.

5. *Haint* (Warsaw), May 4, 1923.

6. *Ha-Holam* (Berlin-London), July 24, 1925, p. 585.

In Minsk, in 1926, there were, according to the Chief Rabbi of France who visited there, about 25–30 local rabbis living on the near-starvation salary of 10–15 roubles a month, while certain areas in that city could not afford even that small amount.⁷

Jewish communities had generally clustered around the synagogue, very often without any connection with other communities in the same city. In some places, as in Leningrad, there was a Jewish religious community which dealt with the Jewish affairs of the whole city, but in no place were there regional or central religious bodies, as in the Russian Orthodox or Catholic churches. Some rabbis, like Rabbi Joseph Yitzhak Shneerson, had a great influence over rabbis and Orthodox Jews in the whole of Russia, but this authority was not official and was based on an appreciation of their personality and scholarship. Occasionally, certain religious matters needed discussion and co-ordination, and that was the aim of the October 1926 Conference of Rabbis in Korosten. Officially, it was only a regional meeting, but, actually, it was attended by nearly one hundred men from different areas of the USSR. It was the first and last such gathering, and its importance lies only in the fact that they met together, for no practical results came of it.

The relatively liberal attitude to religion and clergy during the NEP period passed with the beginnings of forced collectivization of the countryside and the campaign against private traders, “NEP men,” in the cities. This increased industrialization, with the inevitable move from village to city, was not accompanied by a building of apartments, so that there was a housing shortage which the authorities tried to alleviate by making difficulties for “non-working elements.” A decision of the RSFSR Central Executive Committee and Council of People’s Commissars of Dec. 27, 1927, fixed higher rents for traders and “those who did not work,” meaning, among others, the clergy. The decree of April 8, 1929, said that for the “non-working” who had a yearly income over 3,000 roubles, apartment leases in nationalized and municipal buildings would end on Oct. 1 of that year and would not be prolonged. No other residences would be given to them.⁸ Clergymen, thus, were forced to leave their apartments in the cities and to find residence in suburbs or in some still remaining private houses. By the end of March, 1930, there came a more liberal policy and an order was issued by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee to stop those expulsions and, also, “the wholesale prevention of medical aid, forbidding of building houses, expulsions of their children from schools, etc.”⁹

7. Memorandum of Rabbi Khavkin of Sept. 19, 1928. *Yivo Archives* (N.Y.) Movshovitch Collection, File 114.

8. N. Orleanski, *Zakon o religyosnykh obyedineniyakh RSFSR* (Laws on Religious Communities in the RSFSR), (Moscow, 1930), pp. 57–58.

9. *Izvestia*, March 25, 1930.

Nevertheless, rabbis had to pay higher taxes, and, in certain localities, a general boycott was proclaimed against them by trade unions and co-operatives whose members refused to serve them or to sell them anything. A rabbi, writing to his brother in Poland, said,

A boycott was declared during the last day on me and other rabbis, i.e., nothing is delivered to us from the post office, no letters, no money, no parcels, no telegrams. The post office does not take anything from us. An order was given to the co-operative stores not to sell me anything, not even a pound of oil, or a box of matches. There are no private stores in town and at night we sit in the dark. . . . This month I paid more than one hundred roubles in taxes and now I am entirely without a livelihood.¹⁰

In Klinty, the rabbi had told people to pray and to read the Book of Psalms, promising that this would bring "a full salvation in our times," a phrase that appears often in the daily prayers, and for that he was accused of anti-Soviet propaganda, as "salvation" was interpreted to mean salvation from the yoke of the Soviet regime.¹¹ In Kula, Dagestan, the 80-year-old Rabbi Yitzhak Mizrahi and his son were both banished on the grounds that they had propagandized for opening and maintaining religious schools and had collected money for that purpose,¹² while in Velikie Luki, there was a trial against five rabbis who were accused of conspiring against the Soviet regime by persuading people to send children to religious schools.¹³

Former rabbis, who had given up their occupations, were still required to continue to pay higher taxes. Though some were ready to sign statements that they had completely abandoned their office, they were asked to do so in such a humiliating way that only a few of them consented. The Kiev paper, *Shtern*, published a letter, purportedly signed by the local Rabbi Grossman, in which he said that he had withdrawn from his office, had turned to "productive work" after being rabbi for 23 years and had sold all of his religious books to be used as wrapping paper. Though he denied signing it and said that his name had been falsified,¹⁴ other letters like the following became frequent in the press:

"I announce that years have passed since the town of Zhabokyitch has not needed a rabbi and has not turned with any matter to the rabbi and that three years ago I resigned from the rabbinate." Sometimes the language was more extreme:

I, Azimov, the Rabbi of Semyonovka, Glukhov Rayon, announce to everybody that I withdraw entirely from my earlier views and disassociate myself entirely from the rabbinate and religion, and I consider now that religion is no more than obscurantism for the people. To show the readi-

10. *Haint*, Feb. 27, 1928.

11. *Ha-Arez* (Tel Aviv), Dec. 23, 1928.

12. *Ibid.*, Jan. 30, 1929.

13. *Razsviet* (Berlin), Feb. 10, 1929.

14. *Davar* (Tel Aviv), Jan. 31, 1929; *Ha-Arez*, Feb. 7, 1929.

ness of my withdrawal from religion, I hereby enter immediately into the Godless Union.¹⁵

It is very doubtful that any rabbi signed such a letter as this one, but it was published, there was no possibility for him to deny it, and even if it had been signed by him, it is very likely that he did not know what he had signed. The number of rabbis who did officially withdraw from office was, actually, very small. A "Godless Union" report made in Minsk in the summer of 1931 said that 16 rabbis had left their offices and that some of them had done so without making it publicly known.¹⁶

During the collectivization, many rabbis were accused of "counter-revolution," of enmity towards the Soviet regime, sabotage, speculation or opposition to collectivization. At a time when *kulaks* (rich peasants) were sentenced to death for hiding grain instead of turning it over to the authorities, one could find, in the Soviet press, accusations that sacks of cereals were found in a synagogue and descriptions of how, in some areas, rabbis went together with the *kulaks* and damaged agricultural work in the villages.

Rabbis were also accused of not letting Jews turn to "productive work," of sabotaging Jewish agricultural colonization and of opposing emigration to the autonomous Jewish area in Birobidzhan. In New Bilitza, near Homel, Communists accused the rabbis of spreading a rumor that chickens not slaughtered by a ritual slaughterer had become mad two minutes before their death and that people began, therefore, to go to the ritual slaughterer. In Mozyr, clergymen assembled a group of Jewish women and instigated them to demonstrate in the streets and to ask for *kosher* food.¹⁷ Such stories resulted in seeing each rabbi as a potential, if not an actual, "counter-revolutionary." In Belorussia, they were accused of counter-revolution on the grounds of receiving from abroad, not only money, but, also, literature, which they distributed in synagogues. The result of such an attitude was that, in the area of Vitebsk, all of the rabbis left because they could no longer suffer the persecutions.¹⁸

Early in 1930, Rabbi Lazarov was arrested in Leningrad and sentenced to ten years at hard labor and one of his sons was banished for three years for the crime of having contacts with Jewish organizations abroad, particularly with the Rabbi of Lubavitch, who had left the USSR in 1927.¹⁹ In Minsk, in February, 1930, about 20 rabbis and Jewish religious community leaders were arrested on the same grounds and, also, of organizing illegal religious schools and "counter-revolution." The in-

15. B. Erkes, *Fun Inter der Paroykhes; di kontr-revolutzyonere tetikayt fun di Yidishe klerikaln* (From Behind the Screen; the Counter-revolutionary Activity of Jewish Clergy), (1930), p. 42.

16. *Razsviet*, June 7, 1931.

17. According to I. Klinov, *Haint*, Dec. 8, 1929.

18. *Razsviet*, Feb. 9 and March 2, 1930.

19. *Haint*, April 7, 1930.

tervention of Jews in other countries and the great publicity which it brought contributed much to the release of the men,²⁰ but only after a statement was signed by six Belorussian rabbis on February 22, 1930, denying persecution of the Jewish religion in the USSR.²¹ At that time, protests had been made by Pope Pius XI, as well as by various rabbis, against persecutions of religion in the USSR, but in Russia there were denials issued by the Orthodox Church's Acting Patriarch Metropolitan Sergei.²² His statements were said to have been made under a threat that, otherwise, arrested priests would be sentenced to death, to which he replied, "Write what you want. I will sign everything."²³

In Kiev, monasteries and synagogues were closed. Bells were removed from churches and a "decisive" war was led against religion. The postmen stopped serving all religious communities, including priests and rabbis, and anything intended for them was returned, marked "boycott." The electricians union also decided to stop serving synagogues and rabbis by cutting off their power.²⁴ The battle against Judaism and rabbis became much stronger than that against the Orthodox Church and priests. A letter from a rabbi in the Ukraine stated that though priests, too, were persecuted, expelled from their homes and deprived of civil rights, they still could buy their necessities and were not taken out of the food queue at the government stores. Nobody came to take away their religious holy books, and nobody burned their clothing, as was done to a number of rabbis, including the writer of the letter. The furniture in his house had been broken, his prayer-shawl and phylacteries thrown into the fire, and his religious books torn into pieces. Priests did not pay as much taxes as did rabbis, and when rabbis were unable to pay they were arrested. About twenty had been thus arrested, while others were apprehended for arranging religious marriages and divorces, serving as godfathers during a circumcision ceremony, or teaching in a synagogue. When Christians came to court the most lenient judgment was used, but it was different when a rabbi came to judgment.²⁵

Not only the rabbis, but their sons, too, as children of the "deprived," were neither accepted in government offices nor as students in higher educational institutions. Some of these young men found a solution to that problem by issuing a declaration in a letter to an editor of a newspaper, or at a trade union meeting, saying: "I, the undersigned, declare and announce in public that from this day on I no longer know my father who was a rabbi, and I have no connection with the family from

20. *Ibid.*, Feb. 20, March 5, Sept. 23 and Oct. 25, 1930.

21. *Emes*, Feb. 27, 1930; *Haint*, Mar. 10, 1930.

22. *Pravda*, Feb. 9 and 16, 1930.

23. S. B. Troitskii, *Pochemu y kak zakryvayutsa khramy v Sovetskoy Rossii* (Why and How Churches Are Closed in Soviet Russia) (Belgrade, 1930), p. 6.

24. *Emes*, Feb. 18, 1930; *Razsviet*, April 6, 1930.

25. *Hadoar* (New York), March 7, 1930, p. 312.

which I came.”²⁶ Such public declarations meant that any ties with parents could continue only underground and with great secrecy. Occasionally, there were cases in which sons really refused to support their old parents, but in most cases the whole matter was staged. The sons would refuse to support “clerical” parents, who then complained to the authorities. The matter then came to the courts which, in accordance with the laws, forced the sons to assist their parents, “in spite of their unwillingness to do so.” The sons could afterwards claim that they were being coerced and nobody could then accuse them of their relationship with “backward” parents.

Though the period of collectivization was a difficult one there was worse to come, when “purges” and executions took their toll. From 1931 on there came a worsening of attitude. Earlier, rabbis had been persecuted, but from that year on they were also exiled to Siberia and other distant areas, for their very living in an observant manner could serve as an example for others and was, therefore, “religious propaganda.”²⁷ Hundreds of rabbis left their towns and provincial cities and went to Moscow where they found conditions relatively easier, since there nobody knew them. The older ones, who could not work any more, lived with their children while others were employed as watchmen. They worked more than eight hours a day, stood in the cold and frost, but were happy that they were no longer persecuted because of their former occupation and could rest on Saturdays.²⁸

According to one source, watchmen used to joke that when someone came to the head of their co-operative to join them he was asked to show his rabbinical ordination. They said that in the future, when times would change and “return to normal” and somebody would come to a community and propose his candidacy to become a rabbi, he would be asked to “show a certificate that in those days he had been a night-watchman.”²⁹

An American who visited the USSR at that time described his meetings with “rabbis, clergymen and pious Orthodox Jews serving as janitors, watchmen and even coachmen.” In Odessa he had found a rabbi employed as a watchman but still holding on to his office, preaching to his community, advising on matters of religious laws, but refusing to receive any remuneration for that, since “they themselves are poor,” he used to say. In Kherson, that American traveled with a coachman who was an ordained rabbi who had served as such for some years in a little town, but the impoverishment of the community and the persecutions had forced him to turn to his present work, which was hard and paid little. His horse had to eat and sometimes he had to save from his own bread to find

26. *Ha-Holam*, Jan. 31, 1930.

27. *Haint*, July 28, 1931.

28. *Ha-arez*, Feb. 8, 1933.

29. M. Sambatyon, *A Zekster Velt Teil*, part 3 (Paris, 1953), pp. 165–168.

the necessary fodder for him, but, still, he was the master of his own time, could pray whenever he wanted to, and could rest on the Sabbath.³⁰

In 1935, a number of Moscow rabbis and Jewish religious community public figures, among them the rabbis Shleifer and Medalya, were accused of taking money from believers for various religious services. According to an anti-religious publication they were called to trial,³¹ but the trial was cancelled and the accused were not arrested.

The USSR constitution of December 3, 1936, restricted still further the activities of religious communities. Article 124 gave “the right to keep religious rituals and freedom to anti-religious propaganda.”³² Believers could keep “religious rites” but nothing more. “Anti-religious propaganda” was permitted, but not “religious propaganda.” Article 135, dealing with voting rights, gave to all Soviet citizens of the age of 18 and over the right to vote and be elected, without making any distinction because of race, nationality, social origin or former activities.³³ It thus cancelled the inferior category of the “deprived” (*lishentsy*), which included former clergymen, and gave to them, at least officially, equal rights with all other citizens. But these rights were enjoyed for only a very short time. During the “great purges” of 1937–1938, there were, once more, arrests of rabbis and other Jewish religious personalities who had had any relations with foreign countries, with Jewish organizations before the revolution (or whose parents had had such relations), or who had been arrested in earlier years or had been accused but proved not guilty, or who were found to possess religious books or letters from abroad.

Rabbis were accused then, as were some Russian Orthodox and Catholic priests, of spying for Nazi German intelligence services. While these accusations against anti-Soviet Ukrainian nationalists who wanted to separate parts of the USSR might have had some justification, to say as much about Jews, at the end of 1938, when the persecutions of Jews in Germany were strengthened, was preposterous. For example, the *Antireligioznik*, in November, 1938, said that German rabbis had declared their loyalty to the Nazi regime and were spreading false charges against the USSR. It also said that there existed a special rabbinical organization, that seemed to act from Nazi Germany, which assisted spies in entering the Soviet Union.³⁴

Tens of rabbis and other Jewish clergymen were arrested and banished without even being told why and without their families being informed of what happened to them. Gradually, the arrests took on a more

30. *Ha-boker* (Tel Aviv), April 28, 1936.

31. *Bezbozhnik* (Moscow), Dec. 1935, p. 15.

32. USSR Academy of Sciences, *Istoriya Russkoy Konstitutsyi* (The History of the Russian Constitution) (Moscow, 1957), p. 357.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 358.

34. *Antireligioznik* (Moscow), Nov. 1938, p. 54.

mass character, including all officials (and former officials) of religious communities. There was no rabbi in the USSR who was not, at some time, arrested or exiled, with the exception of those who succeeded in leaving their residences and hiding in unknown places. Even old and sick men were included.³⁵ These arrests made Jews who were still free afraid to attend public prayers or to keep any religious customs in public. In some places there was no longer anyone who came to the synagogues because all the regular worshipers had been arrested. The local authorities could then say that there was no longer any need for the synagogues, that they remained unused and, therefore, could be confiscated for other uses.

All of this activity was accompanied by increased anti-religious propaganda which sharply attacked clergymen, both Jewish and otherwise. Rabbis "like clergymen of other faiths were always enemies of the Jewish people," said an Atheists' organization.³⁶ The Kiev Yiddish Communist Party paper, *Shtern*, accused the "Jewish clerics" of spying and diversion, and said that they were "agents of fascist intelligence services." An underground Yeshivah that was uncovered by the N.K.V.D. was accused of "preparing cadres for the fascist intelligence in the struggle against the Soviet regime" and its students "of leading counter-revolutionary activities."³⁷

One Ukrainian rabbi, who arrived in Israel after World War II, had been arrested in January, 1938, and accused of "counter-revolutionary religious activities" and of membership in the Zionist movement. He had refused to admit his guilt and said that visiting a synagogue was not a crime and that it was permitted by the Soviet laws. For months he was tortured until he agreed to sign that he had kept the laws of his faith, but when asked to admit that he was a spy, he refused, and was sentenced to five years at hard labor.³⁸

The 1937-1938 "purges" almost brought to an end what little there had been of organized Jewish religious life and institutions. Only a few communities survived that period, along with a handful of rabbis, most of whom had hidden during that time, or for a part of it. Nobody dared to keep any religious laws or customs in public. Only a few old people who had little to lose could afford to, but they, too, had sons or relatives who might be endangered. Religious life, as far as it continued to exist, went underground.

A slight shift took place with the September, 1939, annexation of new areas by the USSR which brought into the population an element which had received a religious education, had had organized religious institu-

35. *Ha-zofeh* (Tel Aviv), Dec. 22, 1937; Feb. 15, 1938.

36. *Antireligioznik*, Aug.-Sept. 1938, pp. 48-51.

37. *Shtern* (Kiev), Sept. 24, 1938.

38. Benjamin West, *Struggle of a Generation* (Tel Aviv, 1959), pp. 179-181.

tions and included a great number of clergymen. Many of these went as refugees to the USSR internal areas, and their mere practice of Judaism served as an example to local Jews, particularly to the older ones among them.

On June 22, 1941, there began Nazi Germany's invasion of the USSR, whereupon the Russian Orthodox Church immediately declared its support of the Soviet war efforts and its leaders denied the existence of any religious persecution. The government authorities then stopped all anti-religious propaganda, the Orthodox Church hierarchy was reestablished and the Church was given much freedom of action. This situation also influenced the attitude to Judaism. Rabbi Shlomo Shleifer was appointed as rabbi of Moscow, and on April, 1944, he participated in the Moscow Third Jewish Anti-Fascist Congress that was convened with the aim of making Jews in the Western World strengthen their support of the Soviet war efforts.

With the end of World War II, some of the surviving Jews who had been evacuated to remote interior areas of the USSR returned to their former places of living and reestablished their religious communities. Rabbi Yitshak Shechtman served as Rabbi of Kiev, and in Odessa there were three registered Jewish religious communities headed by the elderly Rabbi Joseph Dimant, who had served there before the war.³⁹

This relative tolerance of the Jewish religion did not, however, last long and the Soviet authorities were not ready to permit to Judaism what they did to other faiths. Difficulties were made about opening new synagogues and existing communities were restricted in their activities. Soon, a number of Jewish institutions were closed and their leading personalities arrested or exiled as members of the "Jewish Anti-fascist Committee."

According to the London *Times* of December 21, 1955, there were no more than half a dozen rabbis in the USSR. A call for protest against an atomic war and of support of the "World Peace Council" had appeared a few months earlier in *Izvestia*, signed by eight rabbis.⁴⁰ It was the first time in many years that a group of them signed the same document. A year later, the same paper published a statement by 18 rabbis and heads of Jewish religious communities "protesting" against the Sinai War of Israel.⁴¹ In 1962, the number of rabbis in the USSR was estimated to be about 40,⁴² most of them elderly, with almost no one under the age of 70.

When Rabbi Shlomo Shleifer died in Moscow on April 7, 1957, he was succeeded by Rabbi Yehuda Leib Levin, who had been a rabbi in Grishina and, who, because of the persecutions which forced rabbis to

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Izvestia*, Mar. 18, 1955.

41. *Ibid.*, Nov. 29, 1956.

42. *American Jewish Year Book*, Vol. 64 (1963), p. 351.

find other occupations, had become a watchmaker in Dniepropetrovsk. Later he became rabbi of that community and during the war was in Tashkent. In 1956, he became head of the small Moscow rabbinical seminary (which soon closed) and then rabbi of Moscow.

Rabbi Levin's official status was defined in his seal as Chairman of the Moscow Jewish Religious Community, Rabbi of the Great (so-called *khoral*) Synagogue and head (of the actually no longer functioning) Yeshivah. He was not, as some Western press reports have called him, "Chief Rabbi of the USSR." There is no such position or title. Each Jewish religious community is organized around one single synagogue and each is a separate unit without any relationship to the other. Rabbis are elected by the worshippers of only one synagogue and their authority is only over them. Attempts to establish a central body that would represent Jewish religious communities have failed to bring any results.

There is nobody now to replace the old rabbis whose number declines from year to year. The small Moscow yeshivah barely exists, and even when functioning is unable to fulfill its task. No permission is given to Jews to study in foreign seminaries, as is the case with members of other faiths, e.g., Moslems. If this situation continues, there may come a day in which religious Jews in the USSR will be without any spiritual leaders at all.

From Israel, With Love...

THE JERUSALEM POST

WEEKLY OVERSEAS EDITION

Airmailed every Tuesday from Jerusalem, this newspaper keeps its readers abroad abreast of all the major events in Israel and the Middle East. It supplies the background facts and the analytical interpretations that help understand the rapid day-to-day developments in this area. Each week's issue contains the highlights of the news and features that have appeared during the six preceding days in **THE JERUSALEM POST** daily.

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$21

MAIL COUPON TODAY

To: The Jerusalem Post Weekly

Suite 506, 104 East 40th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016

Please send **THE JERUSALEM POST WEEKLY** for 1 year to: **J**

Name: _____

Address _____

☐ My check is enclosed.

☐ Please bill me.

The Destruction of A Literature

CHONE SHMERUK

Translated by Herbert H. Paper*

Now, when my vision turns back to me alone,
I have to rip open my eyes and see with every limb,
That 'twas my heart that fell, like a mirror on a stone,
And, with a noise of breaking, shattered into pieces.

PERETS MARKISH

THE YEARS 1917–1948, IN THE USSR, WERE NOT notable for a lack of painful problems. Two generations of Yiddish writers had lived through the horrors of World War I, the Revolution, the pogroms immediately thereafter, and the more recent destruction; they were living witnesses and active participants in the struggle of Jews in the Soviet Union for new paths and possibilities, and were active partners in their hopes and disappointments. It is, therefore, no wonder that these problems were clearly reflected in their works.

Twelve of them were, themselves, the victims of repression, arrest, exile, and execution whose aim was not only their destruction but, also, the annihilation of the literature which they created and represented, both as artists and as Jews. The direct physical persecution of Soviet Yiddish literature commenced with the “disappearance” of Moyshe Kulbak and Izi Kharik in the '30s, and continued with the arrest and death of Zelik Akselrod in the summer of 1941. This was, however, only a prelude to the total liquidation of Soviet Yiddish literature at the end of the '40s. Among the first victims to die in this last stage of persecution was Aharon Kushnirov, who still managed to breathe his last in his own bed on September 7, 1949. Der Nister died on June 4, 1950, in a prison hospital, and in the mass execution of August 12, 1952, Dovid Bergelson and Perets Markish, Dovid Hofshteyn and Itsik Fefer, Shmuel Persov and Leyb Kvitko were put to death, while other colleagues continued to suffer in prisons and labor camps. The premature death, on September 22, 1960, of the “returnee,” the sick and tortured Shmuel Halkin, belongs to the painful echoes of this unparalleled brutality. Though the details and circumstances of all these persecutions and murders still remain hidden, because they have not yet been officially revealed, the facts are no longer secret and are not denied.

* This essay is derived from the introduction to the volume, *A Shpigl af a Shteyn*, edited by Ch. Shmeruk and selected by Hrushovski, Shmeruk and Sutskever (Tel Aviv, 1964).

CHONE SHMERUK is professor of Eastern European history at The Hebrew University, Jerusalem.

HERBERT H. PAPER is professor of linguistics at the U. of Michigan.

It is impossible to point to a similar fate for any other literature, not only outside the borders of the Soviet Union, but even within the USSR itself during the darkest years of the so-called "cult of personality." There is simply no value in any attempt at either *post hoc* consolation or at apology that others also suffered there at that time.

. . .

When we attempt to discover those characteristics of Soviet Yiddish literature that determine its uniqueness, by comparison with contemporary Yiddish literature elsewhere, we are certainly not concerned with its territorial isolation, even when its themes would appear to be determined by the boundaries of the country in which it was created. Thus, for example, the themes of Revolution, social pathos, and, in general, Jewish life in "the old country," occur widely even in works written in the United States and in other lands where Yiddish was, and is, written. It is, also, not a matter of any specific formal-esthetic characteristics which might be assigned to all Soviet Yiddish literature, as opposed to other branches of Yiddish literature. The specific character of Soviet Yiddish literature, as a part of Soviet literature in other languages, is to be seen in the special conditions of creativity which, in various periods, imposed a distinctive stamp on its values and possibilities, at least with respect to works that earned the right of publication in the Soviet Union.

Step by step, and quite intentionally, the Communist Party endeavored to transform literature, as it did every other area of human creativity that has the power of being ideologically influential, into a tool for its political-educational objectives. This attempt was coupled with a continuous and many-faceted pressure on Soviet writers to adapt their output to the ideological demands of the Party. The extent of this pressure, which determined the themes, the objectives, and, hence, too often, the value of that literature, derived from the general political and social conditions in the country. A graph marking this pressure would not rise in the direction of continuous severity; its slope is more of a zigzag and, significantly, it gives the impression that at the high points of political-ideological influence on literary works their value was low. And when the force of this pressure weakened, possibilities were created for elevating literary merit and of publishing works which, a short time earlier, or later, would have had to remain hidden.

If we consider the basic tendencies in Soviet literature during the 1917-1928 period, we might designate them as years of "searching," in a double sense. From the party-political point of view, these years were distinguished by a relatively wide tolerance for writers and literature. Although there is no doubt that the Party strove to influence literature from the very beginning, the attempt was carried out by nondrastic means and without a clear position on a number of formal-literary and real-life

problems about which there was still an openness towards discussion and consideration. There was, as yet, no attempt to enclose all writers in a single, legal writers' organization.

On the other hand, in those years, Soviet literature was basically a continuation of pre-Revolutionary writing and of the currents that extend from the end of the 19th century. This continuation needs to be understood in various aspects. The spokesmen and representatives of Russian literature in the '20s were writers who had begun their careers before the Revolution. What seemed to divide one current from another—the striving for renewal in literature—was precisely what, paradoxically, tied them together. They expressed the search for new paths, styles, and forms of creativity in the declaration of their various “isms”—some strongly, some weakly—while denying, at the same time, the earlier glorious traditions of the classical Russian literature of the 19th century.

These strivings after innovation became all the stronger and the debates all the hotter, because they were justified by the social-political changes after 1917 for which all were so eager, according to the notion then widespread, of finding suitable means for correct and adequate expression. In principle, all felt that a renewal of literature was required; but, naturally, they found no common paths. This resulted in the diversified groupings of Soviet writers in the '20s, in which, though they declared themselves, for the most part, supporters of the Soviet regime, they, simultaneously, fought each other bitterly.

The struggle was carried on, not only for literary principles, but also for hegemony in literature and for full and open support of the Party that might authoritatively confirm that hegemony. But the Party-resolutions of the period were often intentionally ambiguous, since the leaders did not wish to align themselves openly in a compact with any one particular group. Even more, the Party was prepared, at that time, not only to tolerate, but even to support so-called fellow-travelers—generally speaking these were well-known writers from before the Revolution who were considered to be literary “experts”—if these fellow-travelers would only not express themselves openly against the regime. This atmosphere of heated debate about literature, relative freedom of expression, and the liberal attitude toward the fellow-travelers, together with grandiose plans to revive publication facilities, influenced a number of emigré writers to return to the Soviet Union. This temperate period, though heated up by continual debates, was creative and innovative, and continued until 1929. Then, the Association of Proletarian Writers achieved full hegemony in the whole country and introduced a rigorous ideological-political and organizational dictatorship—with the approval of the Party—in all fields related to literature.

The development of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union—even in this first period until 1929—was analogous to general developments

in the country. Even before World War I, certain tendencies among Yiddish writers had paralleled the directions and currents of contemporary Russian literature. The beginning of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union was closely bound up with the names of writers who were among the modernistic innovators before World War I. These are the "Kiev group" that published the collections, *Eygn's*, in 1918 and 1920. Among the prose writers to be found in *Eygn's* are Dovid Bergelson, who began to write before the Revolution and had already distinguished himself with a new style in his first published book, *Arum Vokzal* ("Near the Train Station," 1905), and Der Nister, who, from his first book onwards, *Gedanken un Motivn* ("Thoughts and Motifs," 1907) until *Eygn's*, followed a complicated searching path to his unique visionary stories. The poetry in *Eygn's*, no matter how individual and diverse its representatives, is noteworthy for its innovative metaphor, new rhythms, and an influx of prose elements—whether we are speaking of Osher Shvartsman or Dovid Hofshiteyn or Perets Markish or Leyb Kvitko. In all of their works there is a striving to break with classic poetic forms and with the idyllic or melancholy lyricism which still reigned supreme in Yiddish poetry until World War I. Even though Shvartsman was killed in the Civil War and the other writers of *Eygn's* whose names were just mentioned left the Soviet Union in the early '20s, the further development of Yiddish literature there took place under the impact of these published collections. This applies particularly to the Yiddish writers who participated in the Moscow periodical, *Shtrom*, 1922–24.

When new names began to appear in the early '20s, especially in poetry, the same striving for innovation was also strikingly evident. They walked in the footsteps of the *Eygn's* group and considered its members their teachers and instructors. This is clearly seen in the works of S. Halkin, Aharon Kushnirov, Ezra Fininberg, and Zelik Akselrod. Furthermore, it was also quite evident from the very beginning that Itsik Fefer and Izi Kharik, who appeared straightaway with a Soviet-proletarian ideological readiness, were more closely bound to the Kiev group than to the earlier Yiddish revolutionary poetry.

There was common thematic unity in Yiddish poetry in those years; and poetry was the essence of Yiddish literature in the '20s. All of it was seized with the afterpains of the World War I, the Revolution, and the pogroms. The unavoidable passing of the "shtetl" poured over into literal nostalgia; while, simultaneously, there was absorption with urbanization as a personal experience and as a sometimes desired fate for Jews as a whole. One of the deepest expressions in the poetry was about the rupture between national "agony" and general "courage," according to Dovid Hofshiteyn's designation—or, according to Markish's expressive metaphor, the tragic consciousness of being at the same time a "cradle" for the new and a "bier" for the old. This contrast was real-

ized in a broad stream of poems that expressed their strong pain and sadness in the most varied forms, though they were quite often paired with hope and a belief in renewal. A stanza like that of Kushnirov's *Hazkore* ("Memorial") found a resounding echo and was widely remembered for many years:

In my soul a little mouse scratches
My father's or grandfather's melody.
But my own holy Sabbath's door
Profane week has latched with a star.

The poetry of the '20s was also rich in personal lyrics, but there, too, one feels the echo of the age. True, there was no lack of declamatory political declarations and verse slogans, but even there one senses emotional honesty and not just an imposed pathos that does not always fit into the desired ideologically determined patterns.

In the second half of the '20s, their depressing feelings of hopelessness about Yiddish cultural life in the capitalist countries brought a number of the writers of the Kiev Group back from emigration. In view of the upswing of Yiddish cultural life in the Soviet Union and of the new possibilities for publication, they concluded that their return was the correct path for their respectable existence as writers. Beginning in 1925, Der Nister and Leyb Kvitko came back from Hamburg, Dovid Hofshiteyn from Palestine, and Perets Markish from France and Poland. At the same time, Moyshe Kulbak left Vilna for Minsk; last to return and settle in the Soviet Union was Dovid Bergelson, who had elevated the Soviet Yiddish "center" in the periodical, *In Shpan* (Vilna-Berlin 1926), as the only substantial hope of Yiddish culture and literature.

The returning authors did, indeed, elevate the importance of the Soviet Yiddish literary center. Yiddish book production increased. Three literary monthlies were published regularly: *Di Royte Velt* (Kharkov and Kiev, 1924-1933), around which were grouped the "fellow-traveling" Yiddish writers; *Der Shtern* (Minsk, 1925-1941); and *Prolit* (Kharkov, 1928-1932)—the latter two being declared "proletarian" periodicals. Outwardly, everything seemed to be a confirmation of Bergelson's hopes expressed in 1926. Precisely at this time, however, there began the bitterest battles between the various literary groupings in the country and the growing power of the "proletarian" writers' organizations, and these battles were also transferred to Yiddish writers. In Kharkov, Kiev, Minsk, and Moscow—the four centers of Yiddish cultural life—there arose Yiddish sections of the "proletarian" writers' organizations that strove for hegemony in Yiddish literary life. With their noisy activities in the name of proletarian class-consistency and political-ideological conformity, they instituted an atmosphere of terror and forced an ever-growing rigorous censorship on all authors. Bolshevik "awareness" and a 100% agreement with the latest party—and government—decisions were demanded of writ-

ers and editors of newspapers and periodicals, and of publishing-house directors. Following these demands, censorship in periodicals and publishing houses was sharpened, and demeaning self-criticism and self-censorship by the writers themselves began to be operative.

At the time, the struggle against nationalism was added to the serious internal situation after the liquidation of the NEP in the first years of rapid industrialization and forced collectivization. It was particularly active and merciless in the Ukraine and White Russia, where the first liquidations of Communist leaders accused of stimulating national feelings and of stressing the national aspect of Soviet activities in these republics were initiated. Inasmuch as a large number of Yiddish writers lived in those regions this anti-nationalistic campaign was carried over to the Yiddish sector and directly affected Yiddish literature. Yiddish literary criticism, which was then ruled by "proletarian" writers and critics, scrutinized Yiddish publications and made harsh decisions (that often bordered on self-betrayal) about every expression of national feeling in Soviet Yiddish literature. Pessimistic statements about the condition of Jews in the Soviet Union were declared to be harmful; nationalistic limitation was found in the pogrom theme. There was even a demand that Yiddish writers—in their works concerning the Revolution—not devote too much space to Jewish heroes, but should, rather, stress other nationalities. Every wavering, every doubtful or, even, melancholy statement was declared to be an anti-Soviet, bourgeois, or nationalistic expression. Every double-meaning in metaphor—which had now become dangerous—was fought; "symbolism" was declared to be reactionary and only straight-forward single-meaning was demanded.

In the course of the '20s, the regime had willingly stressed the bonds with Yiddish literature in other countries and had invited authors to visit the Soviet Union to publish their works. By the end of the '20s a wall had begun to be erected between Soviet Yiddish literature and Yiddish literature in the capitalist countries. Common interests were now found to exist only with writers who were declared Communists or completely solid enthusiasts, and every foreign Yiddish writer who allowed himself the slightest criticism of the Soviet Union was openly assailed with a vile pail of insults.

This general atmosphere of terror attained its clearest expression in 1929 in a group of incitement campaigns against individual writers that culminated in bitter consequences for them. The best known campaign, which served "to instruct" other writers as well, was carried out against Leyb Kvitko for the satiric poems in which he dared to ridicule the spokesman of literary leadership. Resolutions and decisions were passed against him, and for many long weeks the "Kvitko affair" did not disappear from the columns of the Soviet Yiddish press until, finally, the accused and his "accomplices" were removed from their editorial posts in

Di Royte Velt. A strong campaign was launched against S. Halkin for his book of poems, *Vey un Mut* ("Pain and Courage"), in which that which was most illicit and forbidden in the nationalistic sense was found. Der Nister was attacked for his story, *Unter a Ployt* ("Behind a Fence"), as was Perets Markish for his *Briders* ("Brothers"), for the first part of his novel, *Dor Oys Dor Ayn* ("Generation After Generation"), and for his story, *Khaveyrim Kustarn* ("Comrades Artisans"). The list of attacked and besmirched authors is quite long and included Moyshe Litvakov, the editor of *Emes* ("Truth") and the supreme authority of the Yevseksiya in literary matters. The "proletarian" critics disqualified him because of the kind words found in his early articles about the criticized writers, and, especially, for his praise of Der Nister and of Shmuel Halkin.

Nowadays, the whole onslaught by the "proletarian" writers and critics strikes one as child's play, by comparison with the arrests and banishments of the '30s and the executions of August, 1952. But, in historical perspective, these "innocent" years from 1929 to 1932, when the "proletarian" writers' organizations reigned, were fateful ones for all of Soviet literature, including Yiddish. Many authors paid high tuition fees and learned how to walk in step. In 1929, Dovid Hofshiteyn still allowed himself to step forth courageously to defend Kvitko in a personal letter and to protest against his degradation (published together with an article attacking Hofshiteyn in *Emes*, October 22, 1929). Later on, even this form of protest became impossible and dangerous. Under the reigning authority of the "proletarian" organizations the possibility was terminated for Soviet Yiddish literati to write freely, to think freely, to experiment freely—if there were to be any notion of publishing and of continuing in the writer's profession. Personal and external censorship restricted even further the possibilities for free expression, and only in a few, limited situations was an author still able to find a path for himself and to be totally harmonious with his personal and national conscience.

The complete hegemony of the "proletarian" writers' organizations continued until April, 1932, when the Central Committee of the Party found it necessary to involve itself actively and openly in matters of interest to authors, and, by means of a special decision, to liquidate all literary associations, including also that of the "proletarians." This step was accompanied, for the moment, by a certain degree of softening, because it "rescued" from attack those former "fellow-travelers" who had not been able to redeem themselves from ancient sins in the eyes of the "proletarian" critics. It seemed as if the Party decision had produced a peaceful atmosphere in literary politics. But this was no more than an illusion. As a corollary of this decision, the Union of Soviet Writers was founded, in 1934, to include all who wrote in the Soviet Union, with the result that the Party took control of an instrument which directly man-

aged and supervised its policies in literature. The place of open incitement-attacks was soon taken by the arrests and banishments of the '30s, over which the new writers' union could have had no influence whatever but which, certainly, were no less effective than the earlier methods which had become even more pronounced. The axiom of a literature that had to be "socialist in content and national in form," of socialist realism as the only legitimate method of writing, coupled with the Stalin-cult and with the principle of Party-ism in literature—all together, as well as separately, worked destructively on literature. It must be kept in mind that these "principles" were often formulated in a very unclear fashion and even contradicted each other from time to time. Yiddish writers also had to adapt themselves and become acclimatized to these new conditions. Yiddish poetry became banalized and paeans to the Party, its leaders, and the accomplishments of the Soviet regime began to increase. Although here and there it is sometimes possible to find a fresh word and some honest lines, the poems, in general, have an unattractive effect and are displeasing with their artificial pathos. The lyrics were also routinized because everyone was wary of ambiguity, of a personal word, or of that eroticism which the Communist Puritans did not care for; one had to strive, at any price, to be "intelligible" to the broad readership—all according to the demands of single-minded critics. Everyone was eager to forget himself and to make others forget the creative extravagance of the '20s and their emotional and conceptual daring.

In prose, a great deal of effort was devoted to themes of socialist rebuilding and, according to the "principles" of socialist realism, often polished up a reality that was not terribly attractive. This was placed before the reader in a sea of swollen rhetoric, set in a watery style. The lead was taken by conflict-free themes, or by crudely painted confrontations between "good" Bolsheviks and class-conscious workers on the one hand, and their "bad" class-enemies, the *kulaks*, destroyers, saboteurs, and clerics, on the other. Among the few exceptions that had considerable literary merit was Moyshe Kulbak's book, *Zelmenyaner* (Vol. I, 1931); but, in the second volume of the same work, which appeared in 1934, one can readily note the adaptation to critical instructions that inevitably forced this highly talented and unique writer off the road.

Prose attained greater heights when it dealt with less contemporary and more historical themes. Here we may especially single out Der Nister's *Di Mishpokhe Mashber* ("The Mashber Family"), of which the first volume appeared in 1939, even though it had been begun in 1934. This broadly conceived account of Jewish Berdichev in the second half of the 19th century reveals the sources of the new currents in Jewish life against the background of rich Jewish cultural tradition. The incisive characters of the book (whose second volume appeared in New York in 1946) and the author's individual style place this regrettably unfinished work among

the most important achievements of Yiddish prose. In Dovid Bergelson's two-volume, *Baym Dnyepr* ("By the Dnieper"), (the first in 1932 and the second in 1940), there are outstanding chapters that remind one of his accomplishments in the pre-Soviet era. But as one approaches the novel's descriptions of the revolutionary movement at the beginning of the century, we see that the author was defeated by having to adapt himself to the official history of the Party. Therefore, the second volume sometimes reads like a fictionalized and, thus, shocking repetition of that history.

In the '30s, efforts were made to collect what had been written and printed earlier. A good deal could not be included because it was inappropriate, while the remainder required minute inspection and correction, and in trying to save what could be saved—"to improve and to beautify" the older material.

But it was in the 1939-41 period, when World War II began, that the situation of the Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union was probably most agonizing. The Nazi persecutions in conquered Poland, about which information came from refugees, aroused them. But to write about, and to publish, such matters was not permitted because of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Nevertheless, they agonized and they wrote. What they wrote they hid, until permission was granted, when Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Now we know that, in 1940, Perets Markish wrote and relived the pain in the stanzas of *Tsu a Yidisher Tentserin*, parts of which appeared in the Soviet Union only in Russian translation in 1945; the remainder turned up after his death and was published in the original only in foreign lands. It seems likely that Markish was not the only one who wrote for his desk drawer, and, perhaps, not only in 1940. Let us hope that, some day, other remnants will be found of similarly hidden works, thanks to which the picture of Soviet Yiddish literature will be broader, deeper, and truer than that which can be gleaned from the works that have reached us in censored and purified editions from Soviet publishing houses.

As paradoxical as it may seem, Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union was reunited with its own Jewish national beginnings and again found a common language with Yiddish literature in other countries precisely in the war years which sowed so much destruction and annihilation. Soviet patriotism during that war found itself in harmony with Jewish national anger and agony. And since every contribution toward enhancing Soviet patriotism was stimulated as one faced the enemy, the Yiddish writer was also able to bring into the open his own personal Jewish national feelings. This short episode, lasting only from the summer of 1941 to August, 1946, carried within itself, however, the seed of direct danger for Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union. The decision of the Party Central Committee and Zhdanov's statement in September,

1946, made it clear that the liberal period in literature, called forth by the need to mobilize all against the external enemy, had come to an end shortly after that enemy was overcome. Exactly as in the case of earlier literary incitement-campaigns, loyal guardians of ideological wholesomeness in Soviet Yiddish literature appeared, who “analyzed” and passed judgment on “national restrictiveness” in works by Yiddish authors of the war period. This time, the “sin” consisted, basically, of emphasizing the Jewish element during the Second World War. For about two years, Yiddish writers were still granted the possibility of writing and publishing, although the literati could not manage to restore the publishing facilities that had been destroyed. It seems that the fate of Yiddish literature in the Soviet Union had already been sealed early in 1948, when Shloyme Mikhoels, the chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, was shamefully murdered by the Soviet secret police. By the end of 1948, all that had been rescued of Jewish cultural life in the Soviet Union, including Yiddish literature, was totally liquidated.

An explanation is still lacking for the causes responsible for this unparalleled step by the Soviet regime, for one wishes to find some crumb of logic even among these most fantastic and heavy-handed crimes. There is no doubt that an important role was played by the deep-rooted anti-Semitism which revived during the war, the fear of Jewish consolidation during and after the war, and the warm feelings that Soviet Jews expressed toward the State of Israel at its very founding. The fatal mistake of Soviet Yiddish writers apparently consisted of forgetting the lessons of the '30s, and assuming that the temporary liberalization of the war years was an enduring condition that allowed them to express their true Jewish national feelings somewhat more freely. This “sin” was easily demonstrable in their works, and not only in those of the war years. As bearers and representatives of a “dangerous regression,” they had to be silenced and destroyed in the most effective manner. It seems that in Stalin's last years there was no other solution for this problem regarding Yiddish writers. We know of no physical liquidations of such an extent in relation to persecuted writers of other literatures in the Soviet Union during this period.

This short survey of developments in Soviet Yiddish literature in the years 1917–1948 was by no means intended to exhaust all of its problems or to represent its history. That history still needs to be written.

Revelation and Zimzum

DAVID WEISS-HALIVNI

IS THE CRITICAL APPROACH TO THE BIBLE AND Talmud compatible with the belief in their divine origin?

I am mindful of the fact that criticism, both of the Bible and of the Talmud, has various aspects to it and that they ought not to be grouped together under one heading. I also acknowledge the desirability of first giving a detailed description of the different types of critical analyses which have been expounded by scholars before broaching the question. To know the type of criticism to which our question refers would greatly contribute to the question's clarity and might itself even facilitate its solution, but such an undertaking requires a study of its own. And when a study is pursued for the sake of another inquiry, it often ends up by not doing justice to either the study, since the pursuer's interest lies elsewhere, or to the inquiry, because he has been exhausted by its preliminaries. I would rather devote the full thrust of this paper to the central theme, relying, precarious as it may be, on the selective nature of the question itself.

Any question of the compatibility of criticism with divine origin precludes those critical stances which directly deny the feasibility of a divine encounter, or reject the Torah *ab initio* as the result of such an encounter. To critics of such persuasion, the answer to our question is obviously in the negative. Our question is clearly not directed to them. Though not exclusively, it is directed to critics who admit to corruption in the text, or who admit that many interpretations given of earlier statements in the text itself do not correspond with the intentions of the authors of those statements. Could a text which emanates from the Divine contain such "deficiencies?"

At this point, one would want to know the *standpoint* from which the question is being asked. Logically, one would say, there is certainly no objection to a view which maintains that the Divine legacy was subsequently corrupted and/or misinterpreted by men. Traditionally, one would continue that, despite disagreements over whether Revelation explicitly contained all of the Torah (e.g., this means that all that has been said by Torah scholars and all that will be said in the future, even including what the "astute young scholar may discover," [*talמיד vatik atid*]

DAVID WEISS-HALIVNI is Morris Adler Professor of rabbinics at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

This paper is based on a lecture delivered at the Summer Institute on Judaism and Contemporary Thought, held in Israel, June 28-July 5, 1971. The translation into English of the footnote material is by Rabbi David Gordis.

lehadesh]¹ has been *explicitly* revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai) or whether Revelation initially contained only principles (*kelalim ne-emru le-Mosheh be-Sinai*)² which the Rabbis later applied to particular cases, there is no doubt that Divine Providence hovers over the Torah³ and protects it against corruption and misinterpretation. Tradition's answer to this question, like that of the critics mentioned above, but for diametrically opposed reasons, is negative. Criticism and Divine origin are *not* compatible with each other. From what standpoint, then, the discerning and learned reader would conclude, is the question being asked, if not from the standpoint of logic or tradition?

To which we would reply: the question is being asked from the standpoint of tradition, though not in the conventional sense.* Conventionally, *normative* tradition answers the question in the negative. (I say normative because of a certain passage in the *Tanya debei Eliyahu Zuta* which suggests a less categorical no.) It reads as follows:

I was once walking on the road and a man of sectarian views approached me, a man who accepted Biblical authority but rejected the rabbinic interpretation. He said, "The Bible was given to us on Mt. Sinai; the rabbinic interpretation was not given to us on Mt. Sinai." And I said to him, "My son, both the Bible and its interpretation were pronounced by the Almighty. And what is the difference between the Bible and the rabbinic interpretation? They explained it in the form of parable. What does the matter resemble? It resembles a flesh and blood king who had two slaves whom he loved dearly. To each of them he gave a *kab* of wheat and a bundle of flax. What did the cleverer of them do? He took the flax and wove a cloth from it, and from the wheat he made flour which he sifted and milled and baked into bread which he arranged on the table, covering it with the cloth. He left it for the king's arrival. The foolish one did nothing.

Some time later the king returned home and said to them, 'My sons, bring me what I gave you.' One brought the fine bread on the table, covering it with a cloth, and the other brought the wheat in a box with the bundle of flax on top. What shame; what embarrassment. Say then, which

1. Palestinian Talmud *Peah*, 17a and parallels.

2. *Tanḥuma Tissa*, chapter 16; cf. also P.T. *Sanhedrin* 22a:

R. Yannai said: Had the Torah been given in the form of incisive legal decisions we would have no leg to stand on. For what reason? "And the Lord said to Moses." Moses said, "Master of the universe, instruct me as to the law." He replied, "Follow the majority. If the majority acquits, acquit. If the majority condemns, condemn, so that the Torah may be interpreted in 49 ways (faces) for declaring impure and 49 ways pure."

3. Cf. R. Jonathan Eibeschütz, *Kizzur Tokpo Cohen*, chapter 124:

"And in my view there is no doubt that by 'All this writing the Lord has made them wise by His hand upon them; (the authors of the *Shulhan Arukh* and the *Mogen Avraham*) for the many questions which later Sages asked against them . . . and without doubt they did not comprehend everything . . . so that God's providence hovered over them in order that what they say be correct in the matter of law, even without their complete comprehension, and the purpose of the Lord He caused to prosper in their hands.'"

* Perhaps it should be noted that acceptance of criticism does not necessarily curtail changes in Halakhic practice. Halakhic practice is determined by a process that may not go hand in hand with the historical reality which criticism seeks to discover.

of them is dearer (to the king)? The one who brought out the table with the fine bread upon it. When the Holy One Blessed be He gave the Torah to Israel he gave it to them as wheat from which to produce fine flour and as flax from which to produce cloth."⁴

Yet is tradition's negative answer the result of its understanding of the *essence* of Divine Revelation, or is it the result of not having been sufficiently impressed by contrary evidence to the extent of being willing to abandon old and respected opinions? In the latter case, one is only apparently opposing tradition if he maintains that the evidence adduced by modern critics, which had been unknown to tradition previously, is weighty enough to deserve the same consideration given by tradition to similar evidence elsewhere. The conflict, then, is not so much with tradition itself as with tradition's evaluation of the data put forth by the critics. Conceivably, if all the evidence favorable to critical analysis known today had been available in the past, during the formation of tradition, the latter might not have been so strongly opposed to such analyses.

To be sure, the formal objection of tradition to critical analysis is not an argumentative one. It does not rest on a detection of flaws in the critical arguments (arguments of which pre-modern traditionalists were ignorant). The traditional position is stated in rather categorical terms. Occasionally, however, one may hear the argument, more implicit than explicit, that *Torat Hashem t'mimah*, which they interpret to mean that the Torah is perfect and, therefore, suffers neither corruption nor misinterpretation.⁵ (It was this belief in *Torat Hashem t'mimah* that led Ritba to the extreme position of denying the existence of *de-rabbanan*—the Rabbis' newly instituted decrees or hedges around the law. If there were religious value in them—and the Rabbis would not have instituted them if there were none—they must be already in the Torah; otherwise, the Torah would not be perfect.)⁶

4. *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, beginning of chapter 2.

5. "Since David characterizes the Torah as perfect, it follows that it cannot, in any respect, be deficient in the realization of its purpose . . . For this reason, it was necessary, in order that the Divine Torah should be perfect and should be understood in the correct way, that when God gave the Torah to Moses in writing, He should explain it to him in the proper manner. Similarly, Moses explained it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders . . . and so on from generation to generation, so that there should be no doubt in the correct meaning of the written document." I. Husik, tr., *Ikkarim* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1930), vol. III, p. 201–2.

See also *Kuzari*, Book I, 95 (edited by I. Heineman, in *Three Jewish Philosophers*, [New York: Harper Torch Books, 1945]), p. 45. "For Adam was perfection itself, because no flaw could be found in the work of a Wise and Almighty Creator."

A similar idea, used for exegetical purposes, namely, that the Bible must be self-explanatory and does not need the help of Rabbinic Midrash, else the Torah would not be perfect, is found already in R. Joseph Karo's (1060/70–1130/40) *Commentary* to I Samuel 1:17.

6. Every Biblical source which we have (for a Rabbinic statement), we have because the Holy One Blessed be He noted that it is appropriate to derive this support, al-

Even more important for our consideration is the philosophical argument given for the necessity of a perfect Torah. A perfect God could not have revealed an imperfect Torah! True, the aim of this argument originally was not to reply to criticism (we have already noted that criticism was not taken seriously by Jewish religious scholars), but rather, an attempt to endow all of the subsequent important religious decisions with the authority of a kind of *halakhah le-Mosheh mi-Sinai*.

Yet this argument also carries within it a rejection of criticism. A perfect Torah denotes an all-inclusive book ready to offer instructions in all possible situations that may arise. The Torah must have contained all that was subsequently deemed worthwhile (religiously, at least). It can, however, offer instruction in all possible situations that may arise only if it has, so to speak, a built-in guarantee that the instruction which it offers is correct; that the sources from which the instructions are derived are not corrupt; that the interpretations of the sources for the instructions are sound.

Admission of possible corruption and misinterpretation of the text would undermine, to say the least, the confidence that such a position necessarily assumes. The problem of a perfect God creating something imperfect is also a problem elsewhere, but there, somehow, tradition does not insist on such a maximalistic approach. I am referring to the problem of a perfect God having created an imperfect world—imperfect because of its finite and determinate nature and because of the evil found within it.⁷ In that case, tradition voluntarily adopted the notion of *zimzum*, that God, as it were, withdrew from Himself in order to make room for a finite world. The axiom—that nothing imperfect could come from the Divine, i.e. the perfect God—proved impossible to maintain under the impact of philosophical and existential (evil) pressure. Why, then, can not that axiom be similarly circumscribed with respect to criticism, supported as it is by the weight of massive evidence? We have seen that a less than absolute insistence that everything which comes out of the Divine be perfect, does not run counter to His nature; that tradition's rejection of criticism is not inherent in its understanding of Divine Revelation. Tradition could have accepted criticism—were it convinced of its veracity—by utilizing a notion not unlike the notion of *zimzum* as utilized by the Cabbalists in relation to the creation of the world, namely: that

though He did not establish it as obligatory, but rather left it in the hands of the Sages. And this is a clear and true matter and contradicts the view of those who explain Biblical supports as signs which the Sages (themselves) supplied and not inherent in the Torah. Heaven forbid that this view become entrenched, and let it not be said that this view is a valid assumption.... Therefore, you will find that the Sages everywhere give proof, hint or support for their statements from the Torah. That is, they do not make up anything, but rather the entire oral law is anticipated in the Torah which is complete, and God forbid that it lack anything.

7. Boethius, *Consolations of Philosophy*, Book I, Sec. IV: "If there be a God, from whence proceed so many evils?"

the Divine, for unfathomable reasons, chose, as it were, to reveal a less-than-perfect Torah, allowing erring man to introduce corruption and misunderstanding.

God, of course, knew of this in advance, just as He knew, when He withdrew in order to make room for the world, that men would corrupt and beset the world with evil. Nevertheless, for whatever mysterious reasons, He chose to do so. He created man with enormous potential for evil, permitting him to follow his own moral inclinations, resisting, as it were, interference even when man has sunk to the lowest of depths. Why, then, should we expect of Him to have acted so differently in re-

8. More than *zimzum* solves the problems of evil and finite being logically, it *desolves* them psychologically. It makes it possible for a religious Jew to believe in a beneficent and omnipotent God without having to deny the existence of evil or finite being. No sooner was *zimzum* propounded (it is usually associated with the Lurianic School, but see G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, p. 410, note 42) than a fierce controversy ensued as to its literalness. R. Joseph Ergas (1685–1730) argued:

“One who seeks to understand the concept of *zimzum* literally encounters several difficulties and contradictions of most of the fundamentals of faith; that there is no place where He is not present, above to the furthest limits and below to the innermost source and on every side. And were *zimzum* to be taken literally, then there would be a place where He is not present—you are, therefore, forced to conclude that *zimzum* is not to be taken literally, but rather is a kind of allegory to assist in our perception.” (*Shomer Emunim*, First Dialogue)

Not so, claimed R. Immanuel Hai Rikki (1688/1743):

“And from the fundamentals of these matters we have learned that a person who is concerned about the respect due his Creator must conceive of the notion of *zimzum* literally in order not to demean God by thinking that His Being is present also in the unglorified and even degraded low material realm, God forbid . . . For it is more acceptable for me to say that it (*zimzum*) is to be taken literally, rather than say that it is to be taken figuratively, which would diminish from God’s glory, implying that His Being exists among us even in places which are not fit for it. For it is not as disrespectful to say that the king looks out from his window upon something unclean, as it would be to say, God forbid, that he (the king) is himself part of what is unclean.”

Of all the interpretations of *zimzum*, none is as thorough and ingenious as the one given by R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, (1747–1813), the founder of *Habad*. Yet his own favorite disciple, R. Aaron of Staroselje (1766–1828), persisted in asking:

“From the point of view of the Infinite, does He lack anything about which it might be said that for this which He lacks He contracts and expands in order to obtain it?”

The logical difficulty of *zimzum* is best stated by R. Nahman of Bratislov:

“When the Lord sought to create the world there was no space in which to create it because everything was *en sof* (the light of God’s limitless presence). Therefore, he contracted (*zimzum*) the light to the sides and through this contraction the empty void was created. And this contraction of the empty void will be understandable only at some future time, for one must reconcile the contradiction of existence and non-existence; for the empty void is the result of contraction, for the Lord, as it were, contracted His Divine Self from there, and there is no Divine presence there, as it were; but in truth, of course, in spite of this, the Divine presence is there, for certainly there is nothing without His Living Self.”

See M. Teitelbaum, *Rav Miladi Umifleget Habad*, (Warsaw, 1931), V. II, pp. 37–94.

lation to the Torah? Why should He have given man a perfect instrument enabling him to reach the greatest of heights, without concomitantly making it liable to his corruptive tendencies?

There is no realm free of human corruption. Man has corrupted the Torah just as he corrupts the world. Both were made possible through *zimzum*. God withdrew from His infinite extension in order to make room for finite being, and He withheld His infinite wisdom in order to reveal Himself to man. Neither the world nor the Torah (the result of revelation) is perfect.

It is man's singular destiny that he is painfully aware of both limitations.

9. Elsewhere we hope to elaborate on the notion of imperfection and relate it both to Maimonides' explanation, among others, of the sacrificial system, as a concession to the thinking of the ignorant, and also to the occasional Rabbinic interpretation which annuls the simple meaning of the text. (Cf., B.T. *Yebamot* 24a.)

Man's Choice and God's Design

Reflections on Freedom, Judgment and Providence

(For Will Herberg)

HERSHEL J. MATT

I

IF TO BE TRULY HUMAN IS TO BE CONCERNED with issues of right and wrong, to be truly Jewish is to be pre-occupied with them. For in our traditional Jewish outlook standards of right and wrong constantly enter—and at times tend to dominate—our learning-and-teaching, our public and personal conduct, our casual conversation, and even our private thoughts.

But to be Jewish in modern times is often to find oneself beset by a host of questions and doubts concerning these traditional standards: Are right and wrong absolute—or are they relative to shifting circumstances and varying situations? Are we truly able to distinguish between right and wrong, to choose between them, and to act on the basis of our choice—or is our behavior, rather, the pre-determined product of our heredity and environment, in which case we ought neither to be held responsible nor to be judged? And, what—if anything—does God have to do with any of these: with right and wrong, with human freedom and responsibility, and with judgment?

These are, indeed, basic questions: troubling, far-reaching, and crucially important. They are also questions to which Judaism claims to provide an answer—or at least the essential keys to an answer.

II

Judaism affirms, first of all, that right and wrong are not relative but absolute—having their source in, and deriving their authority from, God Himself, Who is above all the relativities of individual men and whole societies.

Judaism also affirms that God, in His love, miraculously creates man in His own image, and that by virtue of this creation-in-the-image (a sort of universal, general revelation) all normal men are endowed with the capacity to know God's absolute standards of right and wrong. This innate capacity involves a double knowing: knowing that, because God exists, absolute right and wrong exist; and knowing, at least in broad general terms, whereof the right and wrong consist. "Beloved is man in that he is created in the image; even greater love it is that man is so in-

HERSHEL J. MATT is Rabbi of The Jewish Center, Princeton, N.J.

formed.” The oft-cited “seven commandments of Noah (or Adam)” are a rabbinic attempt to formulate this universal morality, which is assumed to be known to, hence binding upon, all men in all societies.¹

Furthermore, Judaism affirms that through the Torah, the People Israel (and through Israel, some would say, Christianity and Islam, also) has miraculously been shown a further measure of God’s love (a special revelation), whereby it receives both more intensive instruction in the specifics of God’s standards of right and wrong and more intense awareness of their divine origin. “Beloved are Israel, in that they are called God’s children . . . and are given the precious instrument of the Torah; even greater love it is that they are so informed.” The best-known summary of the Torah’s teaching concerning man’s moral obligation is, of course, the great passage in Leviticus: “You shall love your fellowman as yourself; I am the Lord.” All rules involving relations with fellowmen are to be tested against this root principle.

In addition, Judaism affirms that these affirmations are *faith*-affirmations: though understandable to human reason, they are not rationally demonstrable; though attested by human experience, they are not empirically verifiable. They involve certainty—not merely feeling, impression, and opinion; but this certainty—that right and wrong are absolute, originating with God and made known to man—is the certainty of faith.

III

This affirmation that man can know God’s standards of right and wrong is basic to the whole notion of morality. No less basic is a further affirmation: that not only can man know right from wrong but he can choose between them; to be created in the image is to be able to exercise moral choice. “I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; choose life.” This ability, this freedom, is man’s unique privilege and glory; it is one of the crucially distinctive marks of his humanity. Every human society known to us has some moral code (in part reflected in, and always presupposed by, its legal code), which all of its normal adult members are expected to obey because they are assumed to be able to obey. And with regard to choosing between right and wrong, Judaism affirms what all societies and, indeed, almost all individuals assume: that men, unlike all other creatures, are free.

IV

But men are not completely free; like all other creatures, we are rooted in nature, restricted by its laws, and subject to its limitations.

1. Sociologists and anthropologists attempt in their way to identify a universal morality, pointing, for example, to a “natural solidarity,” common to every known society, which involves a significant measure of “mutual forbearance, helpfulness, and trust” and is accepted as binding upon all members of at least that particular society.

Our physical endowments and our mental capacity depend, in the first instance, upon our heredity; our survival and growth depend upon a continuing and adequate measure of water, food, sleep, and shelter; our ability to function depends upon the avoidance of, or recovery from, serious injury and illness of body and mind. Thus, to the extent that our ability to make decisions depends upon the ability to function physically and mentally, our moral freedom is obviously limited by natural conditions.

It is also limited by social conditioning. Our parental upbringing, our childhood experiences, our academic training, our relations with neighbors—indeed, all aspects of our social environment—have helped to shape our personality and pattern of behavior. Even in our adult years the impact of our social milieu continues to be great. Although in some measure we are creators of society, responsible for the conditions of society—and are, thus, free—we are also, in significant measure, creatures of society, conditioned by society—and, thus, unfree.

Two additional factors, involving both individuals and whole societies, affect our moral freedom: a) our limited knowledge of the factual consequences of the various options available to us at any given point; and b) the combination of beneficial and harmful results of almost every one of these options. How can we be said to be fully free to decide between good and evil, if we are not able to be fully aware of whether, or to what extent, such decisions will, in fact, benefit or harm our fellow-man—and if what appears, at first, to be a choice between simple good and evil turns out to be, in fact, a choice between two evils?

Our freedom is reduced in still another way: our capacity to make moral decisions in the present is limited by our own decisions, actions, and re-actions in the past. "The performance of a commandment draws another in its train; the performance of a transgression—likewise." "At first, sin is an indifferent stranger; later, a welcome guest; finally, the master." "At first it is like a spider's web; in the end it is like cartropes." Yes, our freedom to choose between right and wrong, to decide, to act—is, indeed, limited.

V

And yet, however real the limitations upon our moral freedom, not all of them are necessarily permanent. Even concerning the limitations of our physical nature, science in its various branches enables man vastly to increase the ability to maintain or restore his health, avoid or survive serious accident and injury, prolong his life, correct or replace or compensate for physical or mental defect, and extend his powers of body and mind. And as for the limitations imposed by our ignorance of consequences and by the mixture of beneficial and harmful results, the growth of civilization has expanded, to some extent, both the ability to fore-

see the consequences of our behavior and the power to reap the benefits of our decisions while mitigating their harmfulness.

Similarly, the limitations imposed upon us by earliest upbringing or subsequent environment can often be reduced. At times, a mere change in environment can relieve the intolerably constricting pressures upon us. At times, counseling and various forms of psychotherapy are able to release us, at least in part, from the chains forged by years of hostile treatment on the part of others or by our own long-established patterns of neurotic behavior. However unfree we are—however “tied up in knots;” depressed or dependent; desperate to escape through fantasy, alcohol, or drugs; compulsively driven or incapacitated by inordinate fear, guilt, hatred, anger, or anxiety—we remain “essentially” and potentially free, possessed as we are of a *margin of freedom*. Using this residual freedom, aided by other human beings who are trained and gifted, we can often manage to transcend, at least to some degree, our previous limitations, and thus enlarge the area of our moral freedom—including the freedom to sin and to be virtuous, the freedom to feel guilty and to repent.

VI

Commensurate with our moral freedom is our moral responsibility. Whatever the extent of our freedom—whether we are ninety per cent free and ten per cent unfree, or vice versa—the freedom is genuine² and the responsibility real; what we do with this freedom is what we are responsible for.³ (“The angel appointed over conception takes the seminal drop, sets it before the Holy One, blessed be He, and asks: ‘Sovereign of the Universe, what is to become of this drop? Is it to develop into a person strong or weak, wise or foolish, rich or poor?’ But no mention is made of his becoming wicked or righteous.”) Man’s task-and-obligation as well as his unique privilege lies in his power to be virtuous by choosing the good or to be sinful by choosing evil. Man’s greatest glory lies in his being able to sin but choosing not to.

Again and again, it seems, we tend to avoid the task and evade the

2. The Maimonidean formulation at first sounds extreme: “Every human being may become righteous like Moses, our teacher, or wicked like Jeroboam; wise or foolish, merciful or cruel, niggardly or generous; and so with all other qualities. There is no one that coerces him or decrees what he is to do, or draws him to either of the two ways; but every person turns to the way which he desires, spontaneously and of his own volition.” But it is extreme only if taken quantitatively (“free in all regards,” “free in all degrees”); if taken qualitatively (“in all seriousness”), the freedom is, indeed, utter freedom.

3. The tradition speaks not only of sins committed deliberately and intentionally, but, also, of sins committed unintentionally, accidentally, under duress, and from ignorance. The sin in such sins lies perhaps in the degree of inexcusable ignorance, of insufficient caution and concern, or of guilt for unintended acts in the present which are the consequence of deliberate acts in the past.

obligation, to abuse the privilege and becloud the glory—for again and again we succumb to the temptation-to-evil which daily assails us. Indeed, “the inclination of man’s heart from his very youth is toward evil, only evil all day long.” Yet sin is not inevitable, since man (with God’s help) is able to resist and overcome the temptation to evil. “Though sin couches at the door and its desire is upon you, you can overcome it.” And even when man has yielded to the temptation to evil and has sinfully turned away from God’s righteous path, he is able (again, with God’s help) to turn back in the turning of repentance (*t’shuvah*). The original freedom and responsibility to choose between good and evil, though to a degree limited by the pull of habituation to evil, nevertheless remains. Indeed, the very fact of temptation and struggle is, itself, a reflection of man’s continuing freedom. And since freedom and responsibility abide, so does accountability: man is to be judged.

VII

By whom is man judged?

By God, of course—for Judaism affirms that God is the God of just judgment. God judges us here and now, on the basis of our conduct of each moment; and He judges us hereafter, on the basis of our conduct of a lifetime. His judgment in this world-and-age is disclosed only in part: traces of the judgment are evident in what befalls us physically, in accordance with “natural law;” in how we are treated socially, in accordance with the “laws” of group behavior; in how we ourselves react, in accordance with the “laws” of individual psychology; and through our own conscience.⁴ For the most part, however, concerning the here-and-now we must acknowledge that what God’s judgment is—and that it is God’s judgment—remains concealed. As regards the judgment in the age-and-world-to-come, all that is at present revealed for sure is that it is sure to come and that the judge is surely God.

So, whether here or hereafter, men are judged by God, who is the only true and truly adequate Judge. He, alone, knows all that must be taken into account: the complete facts of our behavior; the true motives of our behavior; the full consequences of our behavior; and the exact degree of freedom of our behavior. “He is the Discerner, the Judge, the Witness . . . in whose presence there is neither crookedness nor forgetful-

4. Our conscience, though provided by God and serving as channel for the voice of God, cannot simply be identified with the voice of God. To the extent that our conscience has been shaped by society, by our parents and other authority figures, and by our own selves, it is human and, therefore, potentially defective and partially corruptible. It can muffle or distort the voice of God and can even serve as a channel for the voice of Satan. (After all, the number of heinous deeds committed with “a perfectly clear conscience” is legion.) Though we are, in the last analysis, always obligated to obey our conscience, we are first obligated scrupulously and continually to examine our conscience for possible defect and corruption.

ness nor partiality nor taking of bribes—but all is according to the reckoning.”

VIII

But even though ultimate judgment belongs to God, may proximate judgment properly be made by man? We are here faced with a basic dilemma: how can men judge when the requisite knowledge, impartiality, and authority are lacking to them?; yet how dare men not judge when personal life requires moral judgment, when social life requires judicial judgment, and when the Torah, itself, commands us to exercise both kinds of judgment?

Perhaps the dilemma can be resolved if we distinguish among several senses of the word “judgment.”

As regards personally judging our neighbor’s behavior, it is clear that we can and we ought to: both in the sense of noting, as accurately as possible, the facts of his behavior and in the sense of evaluating that behavior in terms of Judaism’s standards of right and wrong.⁵ We *can* judge at least his overt behavior; we ought to, since we have the moral obligation to decide whether, and in what degree, to emulate him, associate with or avoid him, assist or oppose him, and guide and train our children to do likewise.⁶

As regards judging our neighbor’s moral guilt or innocence, it is clear—if not immediately, then upon reflection—that we cannot and ought not to try: we do not know the true motives of his actions; we do not know the full consequences of his actions; we do not know the true degree of his freedom of action and, therefore, of his responsibility. Our tendency, of course, is to assume that our neighbor is in full control of his actions and is, therefore, fully responsible for his offensive behavior, but we are really not able to verify that assumption, and cannot, therefore, properly judge his moral guilt or innocence nor thus judge *him*.

5. This circumlocution, avoiding the use of such a phrase as “evaluating the morality of his behavior,” is employed in the interests of precision, since to speak of moral (and immoral) behavior, conduct, action or deed, is to be less than precise. Morality properly pertains to decision—which, by definition, involves the use of freedom, and not to overt action—which, at least in some measure, may reflect conditioning factors and, thus, a reduced degree of freedom. The slaying of an infant, for example, when done by an insane man, however horrible and ghastly it is, is *not* immoral; the deliberate humiliation of one person by another *is* immoral.

6. Not, however, to the extent of “smothering” and brain-washing our children. Even assuming that methods of child-rearing could be discovered and applied that would insure a lifetime of correct behavior by our children and guarantee against all deviation, would not such utter success constitute utter failure? If a person could be so successfully trained, “boxed in,” “programmed,” and automated that he literally could never choose to do evil, would he not be equally unable to *choose* to do *good*, and would not such a human being have thus been deprived of being truly human?

("Do not judge your fellowman till you stand in his place"—which we never fully can.)⁷

But what of judicial judgment—judging, through duly authorized courts of justice, the neighbor who is accused of a crime against society? Every society asserts the right and duty so to judge and assumes the prerogative so to judge. On what grounds may society so judge? We do so, in accordance with the Torah's authorization and command, on the sole grounds of society's collective right and duty to protect its members from avoidable harm. ("Pray"—and act—"for the well-being of the government, for were it not for the well-being of the government, men would swallow up one another alive.")

We initiate the process of judgment by ascertaining, as accurately as possible, the facts of the case: whether the neighbor who has been accused of a criminal act has, indeed, committed that act. If he has, our right-and-duty to judge him requires us to proceed to make, as accurately and objectively as possible, the following four determinations:

- a) in what manner can the harm done by this particular offender to the particular victim (and to any other members of society) best be counteracted (the loss restored, the injury compensated, the damage repaired, the wound healed, the suffering assuaged, the fear of future crimes allayed, the sense of moral outrage and cynicism alleviated)?
- b) what is the likelihood of recidivism—repetition by the offender of this offense against society, or commission by the offender of other offenses against society—if he is now permitted freedom of movement in society?
- c) if such likelihood is considered to be great, what manner of treatment during his incarceration is best calculated to accomplish his rehabilitation most fully and most promptly and to involve the least possible degradation and dehumanization?
- d) what conditions in our society appear to have influenced⁸ the

7. On rare occasions, the tradition tends toward the extreme assumption that even the most desperate act (*e.g.*, suicide) must have been done deliberately and should, therefore, be "punished" (*e.g.*, by less complete and respectful treatment than in the normal case of mourning for the dead). On rare occasions, also, the tradition veers to the opposite assumption that sinful action is due entirely to the "spirit of folly that enters and possesses a man" and that no man "in his right mind" ever acts sinfully. Generally, however, the tradition avoids the assumption of either complete responsibility or of complete lack of responsibility.

8. "Influenced," not "caused" or "determined." Almost never can behavior properly be accounted for entirely in terms of cause. Various circumstances—genetic, psychological, physical, social, economic or political, may well constitute conditioning factors, leading to a predisposition, tendency, proclivity or likelihood. But, as long as there remains even a margin of freedom, "causation" and "determination" are not appropriate terms to use. (Recent evidence concerning the double-X chromosome factor is a case in point; this factor constitutes "predisposition" but not "cause.") Use of such

offender to offend—and what alterations in these conditions are most likely to prevent similar offenses by others?⁹

Other attempted judgments are morally unjustifiable. Thus, attempts to judge the moral responsibility of the offender, based on an evaluation of his mental capacity and emotional stability;¹⁰ calculation of his “just desserts;” imposition of punishment as “just retribution” or generalized “payment of debt to society;” resort to vengeance, in the sense of needlessly brutal, humiliating, restrictive, or prolonged treatment; and, certainly, capital punishment—all of these, even though commonly accepted as part of the theory and practice of criminal law—constitute the “crime and punishment” and are morally heinous; all such attempted judgments constitute a usurpation of God’s own prerogative. (“Vengeance” and retribution are Mine.)¹¹ Indeed, even the judgments listed above as justified are only relatively justified, since they, too, pretend to a degree of wisdom and authority not possessed by man; their justification lies only in the aforementioned authorization-and-command that society seeks to protect its members from the consequences of each other’s harmful acts,¹² and, thus, to preserve each member’s own basic freedom—including each one’s own basic freedom to sin!

a term as “influence” has the advantage of acknowledging both the offender’s possible paucity, or absence, of freedom (“sickness”) and society’s obligation to remove the conditions that have encouraged such anti-social behavior, without the disadvantage of declaring the offenders absolved of their true responsibility, which, though un-assessable by other men, is known, at least in part, by the offender and in full by God. 9. Strict treatment of offenders is often explicitly claimed, and even more often implicitly assumed, to be effective as a deterrent to others. Evidence—in distinction from mere assertion—for such a claim is often inconclusive, and in the nature of the case is difficult to come by. That the threat of being apprehended and punished is often an effective deterrent to many people, at least with regard to some types of illegal behavior (e.g. driving an automobile at excessive speed) is attested by their own admission. This case for deterrence, however, must be weighed against the evidence that a) the incidence of some types of crime has no correlation to the gravity of the punishment prescribed by law; b) crimes of violence are often committed in moments of passion; and c) at least some people commit crimes from a psychological need and subconscious desire to be punished!

10. Attempts to draw a distinction between the normal criminal (who, being aware of both his deed and its wrongness, is responsible) and the abnormal criminal (who, being unaware of either or both, is not responsible)—however historically significant as landmarks in the humanization of our approach to criminal justice—are no longer necessary (since only the above determinations need to be made) and, hence, no longer warranted (since they constitute human pretension to divine wisdom).

11. In the Bible, “vengeance” is usually forbidden to man because vengeance by him involves an uncontrollableness of emotion and a paucity of wisdom that make truly just judgment impossible. For this reason, “vengeance” is permitted, “belongs,” to God alone, since He alone is free from these—as from all—deficiencies. God’s “vengeance” is merely another term for true justice and true recompense.

12. Whether society is morally permitted, without an individual’s consent, to confine him in order to protect him from the consequences of his own behavior or in order to rehabilitate him, is a difficult question. To the extent that his moral capacity is clearly impaired—by virtue of age or physical or mental condition—society probably does have the right to intervene; to the extent that his moral capacity is unimpaired,

IX

But if man's freedom—his ability to choose and his power to act—is genuine, how can God's own power and will be operative? And if man's freedom is not genuine, how can God's judgment of man be just?

There have been attempts to resolve these dilemmas by denying that God's foreknowledge of man's decisions in any way determines them; such attempts, however, remain unsatisfying, because they introduce a unique and *ad hoc* meaning for either "knowledge," "decision," or "time." There have also been attempts to invoke the authority—and to glorify the paradox—of the rabbinic statement that "all is foreseen yet free will is granted." This statement, however, is such an extreme self-contradiction and is in such sharp contrast with the dominant view that "everything is in the power of Heaven *except* the fear of Heaven" that the former statement must either be interpreted to mean "all is foreseen *except* for free will, which is granted," or else rejected as unrepresentative and erroneous.¹³

The only adequate key to resolving the above-mentioned dilemmas lies in the concept of divine providence (*hashgahah*). "Providence" affirms that God has a plan and purpose for man, for Israel, for the world—but that in forming this plan and carrying out this purpose God has chosen to limit the operation of His own power by granting man the power to choose, to decide, and to act.

Why God should have done so—creating a creature with the power to rebel against the Creator and, thus, to delay the fulfillment of the Creator's plan and purpose, is one of the great mysteries. According to the Midrash, the angels questioned the wisdom, and pointed to the danger, of such creation, but their concern was ignored and their advice rejected. And, according to the Talmud, the schools of Hillel and Shammai also debated the wisdom of man's creation; but their verdict—that it would have been better for man never to have been created—was of little use, being long after the fact! Evidently, God in His divine wisdom, wanted—and wants—to take the risk.

Man's power to deny God and to defy His will is not sufficient, however, to prevent the consummation of the divine plan; indeed, man's very attempts to deny and to defy will, themselves, be incorporated into the consummation. For the plan, known to the Creator from the Beginning and fully to be accomplished in the messianic End, takes seriously into account all the multitudinous details of human history in between. This history, consisting of what happens *to* men (through

society does not have the right—except at the point that the harm he inflicts upon himself causes direct and grave harm to others as well. But to make an accurate assessment of moral capacity is, at times, close to impossible.

13. E. Urbach, in *Sefer Hayovel L'Yehezkel Kaufmann*, argues that "zafuy" does not here mean "foreseen" but, rather, "observed."

God-ordained “natural law”) and what is decided *by* men (through God-given freedom) is the arena on which God’s plan is carried forward. Each move made by any man is met by God’s own move and, together with all the moves of all the other men, is fitted into the divine scheme—as in a cosmic game of checkers or chess, some one has suggested—God playing simultaneously with each man individually and all men collectively. God summons man to hear His word, follow His command, and walk in His way; He gives man freedom to do so; He hopes that man will faithfully obey; but whether man obeys or disobeys, God takes all human decisions and their consequences and incorporates them into the divine economy; using all of men’s good and evil deeds, He allows the game to proceed.

The Bible is filled with references to God’s plan and purpose and of allusions to the human decisions and actions that are woven into God’s designs; indeed, the Bible, as a whole, may be said to constitute an account of their interweaving. Joseph, for example, sees (concerning his brothers’ conduct) that “you intended it for evil, but God made it count for good . . . it was not you but God who sent me here, that life might be preserved.” Moses sees how Pharaoh’s ever-increasing hardness of heart, brought about by the combined workings of Pharaoh’s will and God’s will, holds Pharaoh back from the one possibility of his own deliverance and propels him forward to his own doom. Isaiah sees in “Assyria the rod of God’s wrath . . . sent against an ungodly nation . . . though he (Assyria) does not mean it so, nor does his heart intend so; in his heart is merely to destroy . . . and he says ‘by the strength of my own hand I have done it and by my wisdom’—but should the axe boast itself over its wielder?” The Unknown Prophet of the Exile sees in Cyrus the one “whose right hand I (the Lord) have taken hold of, to subdue nations and kings . . . I have called you by name though you have not known Me.”

Yes, the prophet is enabled to see, and seeks to transmit to the people, a vision of particular aspects of this divine-human drama in its unfolding; the prophet is enabled to hear, and seeks to transmit to the people, a proclamation of what God is doing and what men have done, or have failed to do but still can do, toward the accomplishment of His purpose. And all men ever since, who read the Bible with the eyes of faith and hear the Word with the ears of faith, are granted at least a glimpse of the vision and a whisper of the proclamation.

The full measure of revelation, however—involving full judgment and recompense by God and full awareness by man—is reserved for the world-and-age-to-come. Only then-and-there will the true measure and true consequences of human freedom in the here-and-now be made known. “In the hereafter, the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring the

evil impulse and slay it in the presence of the righteous and the wicked. To the righteous it will appear like a high mountain, to the wicked like a single hair. Both will weep. The righteous will weep and exclaim: How were we able to subdue such a lofty mountain?! The wicked will weep and exclaim: How were we unable to subdue a single hair like this?!" Thereafter, men will choose always the right and never the wrong—the power of the evil inclination having been utterly overcome.¹⁴

Until the Coming of that Final Day, however, we are able to know in faith the only two truths we need to know: that our freedom to distinguish and choose between right and wrong, however limited, is genuine; and that every use we make of that freedom is of genuine significance for furthering God's design and affecting our own destiny.

14. This messianic conquest of the evil inclination presents a paradox: On the one hand, since men will, at last, be perfectly moral, will they not, inevitably, choose only the good? On the other hand, does not choosing the good, if it is genuine choosing, involve the temptation and the power to choose also the evil? We should, therefore, say that men's choice of good in the messianic era will be not "inevitable" but "unfailing."

DICTIONARIES WEBSTER

Library size, 1971 edition, brand new, still in box. Cost new: \$45.00.

Will Sell for \$15

Deduct 10% on orders of 6 or more

Mail to

**NORTH AMERICAN
LIQUIDATORS**

**1450 Niagara Falls Blvd.
Dept. W-1712
Tonawanda, New York 14150**

C.O.D. orders enclose \$1.00 good will deposit. Pay balance plus C.O.D. shipping on delivery. Be satisfied on inspection or return within 10 days for full refund. No dealers, each volume specifically stamped not for resale.

Please add \$1.25 postage and handling. New York State residents add applicable sales tax.

On the Evitable of War

An exchange of letters between MAX BROD and HUGO BERGMAN from the period of World War I.

(Translated from the German by Prof. William Kluback)

Editorial note: Here is an exchange of letters which, although they are more than 50 years old, are still contemporary in their questioning. Brod's letters to Bergman and the stenographic copies of his replies are in Hugo Bergman's possession. Bergman writes concerning them as follows:

On December 21, 1915, Brod sent me—I was at the time in the Austro-Hungarian army in South Tyrol—along with a letter, an article which he had published in the *Prager Tageblatt* of December 19, 1915, entitled “Lectures on Eternal Peace” and in which he wrote of Kant’s wonderful treatise “In Behalf of Eternal Peace” and confessed to a belief in mankind. Among other things, wrote Brod, a state should be prepared to sacrifice something in the interest of all mankind. I was obviously vexed with the “unreal” manner with which Brod handled political matters in his article and I answered him on December 23, 1915: “If you were to be in a responsible position, not as a writer, but as one who had to act politically, you could not adopt the theory of sacrifice.” I referred to the struggle of interests between Jews and Arabs in Palestine where we are obligated not to inflict any harm upon the Arabs and yet only insofar as the interests of our people permit such a course. Brod, thereupon, answered me, in a letter dated December 27, 1915, which I present here, and I wrote the reply which is published here, together with Brod’s ensuing letter to me dated January 19, 1916, with the important “postscript.” In the fifty years that have passed since then we both have learned more, and, probably neither he nor I would write today what we at that time wrote; but these three letters are perhaps of value as a self-confession and, as such, worthy of being published and read today.

Max Brod to Hugo Bergman

December 27, 1915

Dear Friend,

To your letter I must oppose a determined *quod non*. I would rather be a Hottentot than a Jew with nationalistic-imperialist tendencies. I would immediately leave the official party (naturally, not Zion-

HUGO BERGMAN is professor-emeritus of philosophy at The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

MAX BROD was the biographer and editor of Franz Kafka.

WILLIAM KLUBACK is associate professor of history at Kingsbury Community College, CUNY.

ism) if the politics defended by you were the dominant one. Just your Arab example shows the great discrepancy in our outlooks. In January, you will receive the anthology *Das Ziel* edited by Hiller in which I have an essay on the organization of peace. I would like you to turn your attention particularly to one paragraph; there I show that every nation has a "holy" claim only upon the material *minimum conditions* of its spiritual existence and optimum achievement. From this perspective, all warring nations are today saturated; they have their universities, people's educational institutions, or they could develop, even infinitely improve them, on the basis of their material circumstances. Therefore, the crying injustice today *on* all sides. It is not a question of the minimum conditions of the Italian, German etc. spirituality, but only of the material accretion which (as already in 1871) could only do harm to the spirit. The army is employed by Russia's grain exporters, not by its schoolmen. Material improvement is achievable through internal reform and not through predatory wars.

Now to the problem of Jews and Arabs. We should so intensify agriculture that both peoples have room in Palestine. We must promote the spiritual, hygienic, etc. culture of the Arabs; thus we will also serve our own culture. We saw it during the locust plague!!! Were there no place for us (a highly unlikely situation) and were there not to be created an outlet for the Arabs, through exchange, colonization of Mesopotamia—then we should give up Herzl's ideal, although with a heavy heart, and satisfy ourselves with Ahad Ha-am's spiritual center. Or settle in neighboring lands such as Moab, (on) Sinai and maintain only some few islands in Palestine. Malicious Arab attacks, perhaps a prohibition not to occupy their unoccupied territory—in other words, open hostility—we would have to answer with force. Never, however, to be ourselves the aggressors. Never to use "divine judgment" as subterfuge! With that very small right the usurer, the murderer, or the private scoundrel could appeal to the "right of the stronger" to divine judgment.

Had I ever the good fortune to direct Jewish politics in a responsible way, I would give the world the example of a modest, poverty-seeking political posture solely in quest of spirituality, of righteous, indeed, of just, politics. "Justice shall pierce the mountain," is what Hugo Bergman taught me, when he still held the Jews to be a "chosen" people and Jewish nationalism to be fundamentally different from, e.g., Serbian. It is not pride to set such a high goal for the Jews, but humility and respect for mankind. I want a model state or no state! Rather the demise of Judaism than the surrender of its religious idea of justice! It is likewise impossible to combine our views; perhaps provisionally to deal with the Jews as a people like all the others and then, when they dwell in Palestine, to elevate their ideal. I almost fear that this was Moses' mistake. That is why the Jews became savage so quickly, because they had come

in as savages. The second occupation must, from the outset (and up to now this has essentially occurred) proceed in a non-German, non-Bismarckian but, rather, Godly manner, so that the Arabs may bless and not curse us. The essential means this time is not the sword, but the school, the physician, the agriculturist; in particular, the school, education. How much work a people has to accomplish with its youth before it should say of itself: a rise in spiritual power, in permeation with the Absolute is now no longer to be achieved along the path of internal politics but we need, by all means, material expansion, if we now want to advance and to develop ourselves. In the Catholic view, where the spirit becomes freer and greater the more it is separated from the body, one needs (also as a people) no material prosperity at all, nothing earthly, *spiritus fiat ubi vult*. Yes, the rich man enters the kingdom of heaven with greater difficulty than does the poor one. Therefore, it is a sophist crime, when Scheler,* proceeding from this basis, suddenly presents the earthly once more as "pleasing to God" and "holy," as a necessity for the spirit. Rather, we Jews, we who think in more earthbound and worldly terms and who deny the Christian separation of the spiritual and earthly life had a right to speak thus. Yet, to be more precise, we do not have this right either, but must demand, very precisely, only the *minimum* conditions of spiritual development and no more. And now I believe, though, that God will never allow the spiritual minimum conditions of peoples to conflict with each other. In this I believe firmly and sincerely. Only human maliciousness, greed and hypocrisy come into conflict with one another. Those, however, who acquiesce in the spiritual, are selected by God for friendship with each other, for symbiosis, for cooperation, and, in this sense, I believe that each people, formed and raised to this level, is, and needs to be, a chosen people. We Jews have only the obligation to go forward in this direction since God inscrutably, and in His goodness, has blessed us with distinctive talents for just this side of human knowledge and ascent.

The chief enemy of human civilization is, in my opinion, the combination of Christianity and Aryan master morality as Scheler presents it. Regrettably, I find that you have rather strongly succumbed to the assimilationist and completely un-Jewish influence of this new doctrine, the present time and your profession. Even Fichte, and German philosophy in general, is to be used only with care. Just at that point where it is most idealistic is it to be used with extra care. A young poet, Walter Calé, I believe, once said: "The nuances are virtually unbridgeable!" (Allow me the advice of a friend: Read more ancient Jewish literature: the Bible, the Talmud.)

* Max Scheler (1874–1928), one of the leading exponents of the Husserl Circle, was founder of the Sociology of Knowledge and exposed a synthesis between Phenomenology and Catholic Philosophy

I have had my publisher send you my Tycho Brahe. Please confirm the receipt of it.

I hope you are not angry with me because of some strong expressions which I find in reading through the above polemic and which I prefer not to change. You know, indeed, how it is meant.

Sincerely yours,
Max Brod

Hugo Bergman to Max Brod*

Dear Friend,

I want to reply immediately upon receipt of your letter because the questions which divide us are very close to my heart, also. I have to struggle, however, with difficulties for, in that I decidedly advocate an active development, I feel, nevertheless, that limits exist there without being able clearly to define them. This is the problem that makes the polemic difficult for me. Besides, it is almost a joke that you should take against me the standpoint of the New Testament: "resist not evil," while I must represent against you—according to your designation—the this-worldly, Jewish, rationalist point of view.

This is what I reproach you with: a lack of the sense of reality. Idealism should not shut its eyes in the presence of reality. You do thus, my dear friend.

Your chief argument is the material minimum conditions for spiritual existence to which, and to which, alone, a people should have a claim. What are minimum conditions? stale bread or meat every day? 8 or 10 or 12 working hours? The coolies also have a minimum. Must not the worker strive for such living conditions that he can send his sons to secondary schools, that he, himself, have the time and the money to partake in the spiritual life of mankind? Is the war which is fought for such ends less holy than one for naked existence? It seems to me that it would be better for humanity to let its children be physically destroyed than that they experience nothing of life and spirit. The minimum, thus, helps me only as long as I know nothing more about it, nothing further.

Naturally, it is also my view that the material improvement of a people's life must be achieved through internal reform and not through predatory wars. Unfortunately, I do not have enough economic understanding to be able to say whether this war might have been avoided "economically." Perhaps, if we did not have capitalism. However, we do have it, and, so, we can then not say, if we want to be, in your sense, "Jewish": "This economic approach is too dirty for me, I do not touch it, I reject everything that is derived from it, I yield up to the pure heavens." This is just the attitude which you rightly oppose and yet, evidently, fall into when you—too lightly—write: "The army is used by

* Stenographic copy, not dated, early 1916.

Russia's grain exporters, not by its schoolmen." Don't you see how unreal and ineffectual such a way of contrasting and such idealism must be! Oh no, not only the exporters, but, also, the farmers, the artisans, and with them, also, the teachers are interested in the growth of their own national economy. The behavior of all workers in *this war* shows this clearly.

I repeat and I emphasize: Certainly everything must be tried to avoid war. And I do not say that this time everything was tried; that no one can now judge. Although it is an extreme, this extreme must be allowed and admitted in ethics. The formula of "Non-Aggression" is correct only in regard to the basic attitude and view which the politician learns in peace time. Whether or not August 1, 1914 was aggression is meaningless; even for peace it is inadequate. Again I use my Arab example. That our way of taking possession in Palestine proceeded in an un-Bismarckian way or even, as you say, a divine one, is an idyll that you have unfortunately dreamt up. The means this time was not the sword but, in most cases, money, which was paid to official owners, to the Effendi so that he dispossessed the actual land worker. (Not to speak of bribes, *bak-sheesh*.) The soil which we cultivate was, earlier, cultivated by Arab faleshtin. I am naturally eager to avoid conflict and stated so in the periodical "Palestine," but I realize that with the best of will it cannot be avoided if we want to go to Palestine. Judged privately, and not nationally, the concept of an "outlet" for the Arabs is unjust. Why should the Arab have to go to seek land in Mesopotamia when his ancestors, for generations, were settled in Merchavjah, Kinneret, etc. Dear Mr. Brod, we are facing conflicts here, and it does not help to act like the proverbial ostrich. When I think of how much dirt, bribery and repression were used against the Arabs I do not know whether the way of Moses, the way of the sword, may not have been purer and nobler. Understandably, I do not defend this repression. 70% of this repression can not be justified, 30%, however, was necessary and is ethically justified by the fact that our national development is, after all, also a value (thus far your transference and application to private morality is false) and, in my view, it needs Palestine absolutely; on the other hand, Arab development does not need it. This, of course, an Arab will not admit. Besides, don't the Jews also have the minimum? If, as it appears, all peoples have the minimum, the less it helps us overcome the difficulties.

I summarize thus:

1) Each people has the right to an infinitely ongoing development of the spirit of its children, both the right and the duty.

2) To strive with all means to respect the rights of other nations and never, unless in extreme necessity, for one nation to subjugate or decimate another.

3) I do not believe that these conflicts can be simply avoided.

4) If fate has placed two peoples alongside each other so that it becomes a question of "I or you" and conflict is unavoidable, then the egoism which, in such a case is valid for private morality, is ethically commanded and the struggle is a divine judgment, and here I make no distinction between minimum and higher development.

Cordially yours,
Hugo Bergman

Max Brod to Hugo Bergman

January 19, 1916

Were I not so overburdened with work (I still give a beginners course in Zionism at the Girls' club, 4 courses altogether now) I would have answered long ago.

To distinguish: whether a war possibly can be moral and whether this war is so. The latter I deny categorically.

The first I must concede as an extreme, exceptional case, i.e., if it really "concerns the material, minimum conditions for maximum, spiritual achievement." For example, the Dardanelles certainly do not belong to Russia. In time of peace Russia is, indeed, permitted to use them, but not in war nor with warships. In fact, she needs the Dardanelles to be able to carry on war better; consequently, she makes war for the sake of future wars.

I believe that a people which takes seriously its higher spiritual development, will learn more and more to purify itself from material filth, greed, capitalism and internal injustice and, thus, it will become, through spiritual growth, more and more modest in material matters because it will desire material goods, not for their own sake, but only for the sake of the spirit which they make possible and which they esteem. The higher the spiritual level, the less friction among peoples.

This seems to be true divine judgment, that peoples in their material greed breed in themselves a madness for power, Imperialism, Nietzsche's master race concept, the blond bestiality, chauvinism, and that they are enticed to war against each other and must annihilate each other and themselves materially.

Barbarism destroys barbarism; spirit furthers spirit.

Had the Romans followed the internal reforms of the noble Gracchi, they would not have needed to become world conquerors and to batten on conquered goods, and then, inwardly, fall apart like a house of cards. This is divine judgment.

God is not on the side of the stronger battalions, the devil is. If, indeed, such a kingdom of the spirit is erected (in Eretz Israel) then we must defend it with the last drop of blood. But perhaps that will not be necessary. Our example will disarm. Perhaps! After all, this is the only possible borderline case of war that I concede.

There is a false ideology that goes deeper than practical life, but life must yet be permeated by a true ideology, i.e., become "idealized;" as pure brutal reality it should not force its will upon us. Thus I see the order of precedence:

1) God—Ideal—Judaism; 2) Practical life, realities; 3) False (Christian) ideals—flight from the world.

Have you received my "Tycho"? Perhaps you will write a review about it in Buber's journal which will surely be printed if you have the time and the desire.*

In Haste
Your cordially devoted friend,
Brod

Postscript: Containing the more essential points.

The difficulty of the whole inquiry lies in the concept of the minimum conditions. On this point we do not yet understand each other, but we could come to an understanding because there is here no contradiction in principle.

You have misunderstood me if you believe that by this minimum I mean perhaps the minimum for existence—*Existenzminimum*—and it is upon this, it seems to me, that your whole argument rests, i.e., upon this misunderstanding.

I do mean: Minimum conditions for highest *spiritual* achievement. The stress is on "spirit" and "highest." Therefore, reductions in working time, etc.—what you cited—all these belong within my concept.

Every people, before it wages war, should face the question: Can we not, through internal reform, achieve the desired, continuing unfolding of our spirit; do we need more land for it? Or do we want more land only because we want to avoid equitable internal reforms?

The Jews are an "exceptional case," and for this reason your Arab example is misleading. The Jews do not want more land, but only a foothold. Obviously, we do not have the minimum conditions for spiritual development. Without Palestine, we perish spiritually in the Diaspora.

But what about the Italian nation or the German? Damaschke states that, within Germany, through reclamation, land equivalent to the size of Saxony can be reclaimed. And if the higher nobility, the Junkers who now act so patriotically, really meant it and would agree to a just division of the land as proposed by Oppenheimer, then we would need no colonies, no fleet. And if the English, instead of using their free time for the idiocy of sports, would use it for land reform and internal education, then they could renounce "world rule."

I would go further: I maintain that material acquisition of territories in war promotes inner spiritual indolence and injustice. M. B.

* The review appeared in *Der Jude JHG*. I, 1916, pp. 134-136. H.B.



WORLDVIEW WORLDVIEW WORLDVIEW

It doesn't matter how you say it. The word makes our point: If we are going to understand what's happening around us, we must have a worldview, an overall picture into which all the pieces fit.

In *Worldview* this comprehensive picture includes ethics, morals and religious values. The editors believe that any analysis of our present cultural and political problems which ignores this moral dimension is at best incomplete—at worst, misleading. What is changing America and the world is nothing less than a *cultural crisis* which is reshaping the little examined ethical and religious values underlying social reality.

Worldview grapples with the policy and the premise, the *is* and the ought of public issues,

trying to define the vital links between American interests and American obligations, between world politics and moral imperatives. *Worldview* aims to sharpen the analysis that shapes the action. How? By lively and deliberate dialogue. Among the strong opinions of *Worldview's* editors is that opposing opinions must be heard.

Worldview is directed to that reader who, at a time of confrontation, believes in the value of dialogue; who, in the face of apocalyptic assertion, is willing to search for the better course; and who, when political action is widely being discredited, affirms the necessity and value of politics. If you are this kind of reader, *Worldview* is your magazine.

(Published Monthly—64 pp.)

Edited by: James Finn, Peter Berger, Richard J. Neuhaus, Eugene B. Borowitz, Wilson Carey McWilliams

Please enter my subscription to WORLDVIEW :		<input type="checkbox"/> Payment enclosed
<input type="checkbox"/> 1 yr., \$10	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 yrs., \$18	<input type="checkbox"/> Please bill me
<input type="checkbox"/> 3 yrs., \$25		
Name _____		
Address _____		
City _____		
State _____ Zip _____		
Published by: Council on Religion and International Affairs 170 East 64th Street, New York, N. Y. 10021		

FOUR RECENT STUDIES OF JESUS THE JEW

Review-Essay by MORTON S. ENSLIN

The Trial and Death of Jesus. By HAIM COHN. Harper & Row. New York, © 1967, 1971. xxiv+419 pp. \$12.50

Jesus and Israel. By JULES ISAAC. Edited, and with a Foreword, by Claire Huchet Bishop. Translated by Sally Gran. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York, 1971. xxiv+405 pp. \$12.50.

The Execution of Jesus: A Judicial, Literary and Historical Investigation. By WILLIAM RILEY WILSON. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York, 1970. x+243 pp. \$7.95.

Was Jesus Married? The Distortion of Sexuality in the Christian Tradition. By WILLIAM E. PHIPPS. Harper & Row. New York, 1970. 239 pp. \$5.95.

THESE FOUR VOLUMES ARE VERY DIFFERENT IN theme, in method and style, and even in competence, but they have one element in common: the insistence that Jesus was in all respects a Jew, not a Christian. This is no new literary adventure; for many years there has been a continuing cascade of books and articles sounding that note and emphasizing that, though the way of Synagogue and Church had definitely and finally parted within a century of the death of Jesus, the new religion was certainly the daughter of the old, with a heritage which was both formative and lasting. This recognition of, and insistence upon, a patent fact needs continuously to be stressed in view of the widespread, if erroneous, notion encouraged by Hoffman's "Jesus in the Temple" or Mohr's *holder Knabe im lockigen Haar*. For many, images of this sort are far more influential than the clumsy pronouncement of some Nazi champion of Aryan descent.

In recent years there has been an almost endless discussion of the trial and death of Jesus, with the principal emphasis regularly laid on the two queries: "By whom?" and "Why?" Nor are reasons for this concern obscure:

(1) an unfailing interest, from the earliest days of the Christian movement, in what has always seemed, for many millions of men, the most important act in world history and of unquestioned centrality;

MORTON S. ENSLIN is professor of Christian thought and literature at The Dropsie University, and a former editor of *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

(2) a never-failing tendency still further to heighten Jewish blame—this view has been present from the days of Chrysostom and even earlier, was insistent in the days of the Crusades, and, unfortunately, is still to be found in the routine utterances of some clerics and theologians more acquainted with traditional repetitions than with solid and sober historical study, as well as in the works of heedless popular writers of the Papini and Daniel-Rops stature who are more concerned with producing a popular best seller than with such minor concerns as history and truth;

(3) a growing restiveness and regret on the part of many Christians at the deadly use made of Matthew's report, "His blood be on us and on our children," and of what is easily seen as a virulent and unqualified anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John;

(4) a quite understandable indignant and outraged retort, "We didn't do it!" from Jews, the constant target of such easy epithets as "a deicide people" and "Christ killers."

A recent issue of this Journal (Winter, 1971) was devoted to a symposium, "The Trial of Jesus in the Light of History," in which nine scholars, all of them long interested in the subject, pooled their varying insights and conclusions. Three of the four volumes which this essay is supposed to review are devoted to this same central theme.

Justice Cohn's basic contention will probably be known to readers of these pages, for his was one of the essays in the recent symposium. That article was a précis of his volume, *Mishpato u-moto shel Yeishu ha-Nozri*, which had recently appeared in Hebrew and of which *The Trial and Death of Jesus* is an English translation. His thesis (I thought I was acquainted with every possible approach to this question) was new to me: Not only are the Jews of today utterly free from charges of inherited guilt, but their forebears in the "fifteenth year of Tiberius" were also. Far from being in any way responsible for the arrest, accusation, verdict, and execution of Jesus, they had done their utmost to keep him safe from the murderous hands of Rome. The temple police had been party to his arrest, but for the purpose of taking him in safety to the high priest and his assembled Sanhedrin. The full Sanhedrin had met (Justice Cohn by no means shares the opinion of the many scholars who find the reports of the "Jewish nighttime trial" unlikely) at this time when only the realest emergency could warrant their presence. In no sense, however, was it a hostile court seeking grounds for a warranted or unwarranted transfer to Pilate; instead, it was a group passionately concerned to prevent their fellow countryman, dearly beloved by many of the nation, from falling into the hands of his certain executioners. The high priest, by his impassioned queries, was not trying to involve Jesus in claims which would have been fatal. On the contrary, he was

begging Jesus to disavow any claim which, if reported to Pilate, could end only in crucifixion. When Jesus refused to hearken, refused to agree, it was then that the high priest had torn his robes—not in consequence of any uttered blasphemy but solely in sad despair.

This thesis is worked out in the fullest detail. The volume is a typical lawyer's brief. Justice Cohn is determined to win his case, to establish the utter innocence of his client, Jewry, both then and now, and he presents (and withholds) evidence in the manner of the skilled and experienced attorney for the defense. As is not unusually the case, many court verdicts do not reflect the real situation—did the accused so act or did he not?—but, rather, the skill of his counsel in presenting and interpreting his evidence and ruling out of consideration such materials as would likely be unfavorable.

In the more than limited space at my disposal I cannot amplify as I would like. In my reading of this useful and provocative volume I made forty pages of notes, over which I must pass in silence. While Cohn is not primarily a historian and bears evidence of this fact not infrequently, he throws very real light on matters where perplexity is still possible. The trained (and clever) lawyer is set to get his client free, and he leaves no possible danger spot unconsidered and explained away. His opening statement to the court is:

Our purpose is to show that neither Pharisees nor Sadducees, neither priests nor elders, neither scribes nor any Jews, had any reasonable cause to seek the death of Jesus or his removal. Without such, it will be submitted, the reports that they sought to destroy him (Matt. 12:14; Luke 19:47) or that they counsel together "for to put him to death" (John 11:53; Luke 22:2; Mark 14:1) are stripped of all plausibility (p. 38).

This he establishes to his complete satisfaction: the order of arrest being solely Roman, and with no Jewish instigation. But he never makes clear, at least to me, just how Pilate had become involved. The trial was not a Jewish trial; the meeting of the Great Sanhedrin at night in the high priest's house was not illegal, as would have been a real trial before the lesser Sanhedrin, alone competent and permitted to handle and judge religious violations. This charge of illegality, often raised by the prosecution, is carefully and lengthily refuted. Similarly, every detail, regardless of its historic value or its lack, is weighed and argued, often at great length and in a way utterly to confuse the issue and those attempting to follow the argument. Adverse evidence is discreetly not presented whenever such a course is possible; if that prove impossible, it is persuasively explained away. Thus, I Thess. 2:14–15, could well be awkward in view of Cohn's claim that from this man, Paul, who must have known the facts, there is not a word of blame leveled at the Jews for killing Jesus. To be sure, Paul does say of them, "who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets," but that sort of "killing" was spiritual rather than physical, and it is grossly exaggerated. So for four hundred

pages the eminent jurist pleads his case with consummate skill and artistry.

Professor Isaac's *Jesus and Israel* is a very different sort of book, although once again the trial of Jesus and the denial of Jewish responsibility and guilt are central. But while central, the chief emphasis, nonetheless, is a flaming indictment of Christian guilt at cursing and seeking to crush Judaism through the resultant centuries with unwarranted and perverse **guilt and to label generation after generation of innocent victims "Christ killers" and "deicides."**

In this volume there are two literary styles plainly to be seen: (1) careful and solid historical analysis and discussion, evidencing the trained historian; (2) passionate outbursts, with biting scorn and amazed indignation at those who continue endlessly the awful libel. In some passages—at least in the present English translation—sentences become long and complicated; at times they are grammatically incomplete, with verbs falling by the wayside and with other ellipses and, to me, obscurities of utterance. The tender "In Memoriam/ To my wife and daughter/ Martyrs/ Killed by Hitler's Nazis/ Killed/ Simply because their name was/ ISAAC," explains in no small part the book, for Isaac is convinced that Auschwitz and the other recent horrors were but the inevitable consequence of the long centuries of repeated and unwarranted condemnation.

Like Cohn, he seeks to free Jews completely from the onus of responsibility or initiative in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. Similarly, he stresses the Jewishness of Jesus and his parents, and resolutely—and, I think, properly—frees Jesus from anything smacking of rejection of the Jewish people. Even the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, which in the Synoptic Gospels (Mark 12: 1–11, and parallels) has been reworked into a palpable allegory, is laboriously, but not convincingly, explained away by Dr. Isaac. Far from being the object of suspicion and hatred, Jesus was the darling of many—seemingly, as Isaac writes or disclaims, of most—Jews of his day. Unlike Cohn, who guards all Jewry without exception, Isaac constantly fulminates against what he styles "the enemy clique of Jews—pundits, scribes, and Pharisees," and insists that such as these were in no sense representative of the people. Rather, they were "perfectly *disqualified*" representatives of the Jewish nation. Due to Isaac's frequent mention of "Pharisees" as being among the bad crowd against whom Jesus properly spoke, there is a danger that the casual reader might feel that Isaac is ill-advisedly rebuilding old walls which, due to the work of scholars such as George Foot Moore and Travers Herford, have been happily torn down. But this possible impression is far from the fact, although it caused both the editor and translator of the volume no little concern. To Isaac's mind, there were Pharisees and Pharisees. They were by no means all alike. Many were far from being opposed to Jesus or attacked by him. Thus, to say that the Jewish peo-

ple “as a whole” rejected Jesus is wickedly perverse. Most of the “Jewish people” of that day were in the diaspora and had never seen or heard of Jesus; of those in Palestine, wherever Jesus went they took him to their heart. There is no slightest evidence that they ever turned from him. Nor can it be charged that the Jewish people rejected Christ or the Messiah or the Son of God. For that often raised charge to be true there would have to be clear evidence that Jesus revealed himself as such, and of that the Gospels give us good reason to be more than doubtful.

With much of Isaac’s historical criticism I find myself in at least general agreement, although on many points of detail we do not see eye to eye. The book, although born in distress and showing very clear evidence of that stark fact, has very real and lasting values, even though many of the emphases are but restatements of facts long known, if be-times disregarded.

The frequent flaming indictments which Isaac makes of writers, both cleric and lay, are surely warranted, for their quoted words which he holds up to scorn are neither to be defended nor excused. But as I read them—and on finishing the book I was sick at heart—they were, at least to me, hardly representative. Very revealing was his word about Christians a bit more kindly disposed: “a tiny minority, with a tiny audience, while the murderous tradition continues to be planted in defenseless souls by routine theologians, heedless writers, more concerned with worldly success than with pure truth” (p. 364). Perhaps this is warranted in France; it surely needs a good deal of qualifying in America, and, I could hope, elsewhere. Occasionally, he cites a few more competent scholars. But too frequently the quoted word is brief, out of context, and misleading, so that often it by no means indicates what the scholar’s own opinion was on the point at issue. From this angle, then, the book is a slanted one, but it is understandable and not to be casually dismissed. Its basic protest is proper; its cry of anguish understandable and compelling.

But there are many folk in the Christian tradition who deplore and protest against the century-long accusations which are, to them, improper, even obscene, a stench in their nostrils. They may be a “tiny minority, with a tiny audience,” but they are insistent, and they are being heard. It is time to realize that there is a vast difference between “*are* guilty of” and “*were* guilty of”—or, more exactly phrased, between “*were guilty of*” and “*were responsible for*.” What the circumstances were in C.E. 28 are properly to be examined and dispassionately reported by men qualified so to do, without fear or favor. A verdict about an act which later events have seemed to prove unwise, or even wicked, cannot justly be transferred, to the heads of remote descendants. My one regret is that in this flaming and honest denunciation Dr. Isaac may actually, by unfortunate, if understandable, overstatement and omission, lessen

the impact of a volume which merits thoughtful, sober, and unimpassioned attention.

The third volume, that by Professor Wilson, also concerns the trial and execution. While a much briefer and less pretentious volume, in some ways it is the best of the three from the standpoint of sober history, soberly appraised. While undoubtedly greatly concerned with the importance of the subject, Wilson has no apologetic purpose to achieve, no client to free from the dock, no fellow people to be released only if the presented evidence can be made to sound convincing.

In a real sense, Wilson's little volume is really two. He has written a very simple and nondemanding account or report of the findings in this particular area, for what may be styled the "general reader," who is not supposed to have any historical knowledge. The text tells the story in a simple, orderly, and uncluttered way, often with acute suggestions and proper indications of the author's own competent findings. He gives a clear and able précis of gospel criticism, of the so-called "Passion Narrative," and its growth or accumulations in the several Gospels; he characterizes succinctly Form Criticism—its nature, limitations, and weak spots; he attempts to see the historic nucleus in the passion narrative before it had been added to, and he considers and weighs the contributions of various representative scholars and their several analyses. His conclusion is that there is probably more solidly historical material preserved in this portion of the Jesus story than anywhere else in the Gospels. Then he considers, consecutively, the story of the trial in Mark and Matthew, in Luke, and in John. Following this analysis he turns to such themes as "The Jews, the Romans, and the Gospel Record," "Climactic Days in Jerusalem," "The Jewish Proceedings," "Roman Condemnation," "Execution," and "Conclusions: Legality and Responsibility."

Thus, the volume is a sober, solid, responsible reconsideration of an oft-debated subject. And it is presented in such a way that the man to whom it is not an old story may learn and understand. All technical matters are reserved for the footnotes, of which there are some 35 closely printed small-type pages at the end of the book. This format may free the "general reader" from the terror of trying to read a book with footnoted pages; it puts a real burden upon the reader who is not quite so "general" or easily rebuffed, for in these notes is a wealth of important material, particularly an amazingly full and convenient survey of those who have written on any phase of the subject. For such a reader, the nuisance of constantly being obliged to flip the pages from text to note is very real. This format, that is, these notes, are my reason for styling it "two books," as I did at the start of the preceding paragraph.

One of the most valuable and useful features of this book is the clear précis in Appendix II of the views of three scholars who have made distinct contributions to this subject, two of whom were among the writ-

ers of the aforementioned symposium, viz., Joseph Blinzler and S. G. F. Brandon, and of Paul Winter, whose repeated treatment of this section of the Christian story has been widely acclaimed. All told, while there are details with which the critical reader may find himself forced to differ, the book is a solid and useful study, unpretentious and without startling conclusions.

Professor Phipps' volume has a sensational title, "Was Jesus Married?" and is written deliberately in a mildly sensational way. His very full discussion of the centrality of, and high regard for, marriage in Judaism will not strike any reasonably intelligent reader as particularly new or novel. Then Phipps proceeds to stress the fact that Jesus and his family were impeccably Jewish. Therefore, the conclusion is, to Phipps, obvious and terribly important: Jesus most certainly simply *must* have been married. In Chap. 3, which has the snappy title, "The Sexuality of Jesus," he finds it highly likely that not only did Jesus have sexual temptations, as most men do—and, as Phipps is seemingly sure, "all men should"—but that he yielded to them and promptly got married. After considering the matter of Jesus' relations with women, both in general and in particular, Phipps decides that the most likely spouse for Jesus was Mary Magdalene, who may have been, or later became, a prostitute. Other possible variants of the certain fact of Jesus' wedded state are: he married a woman named Mary, but she may not have been his first wife; he may have been a widower; it is perhaps more likely that, though he was married, his wife found it impossible, or at least unpleasant, to travel around with him, and preferred to stay home, tending the house and children. On another page, but in a not dissimilar context, Phipps concludes that perhaps Jesus, like Hosea and Socrates, descended into the hell of having to endure a "bitchy hussy" (p. 91).

So far as proofs of Jesus' marriage are concerned, although none seems to be at hand, Phipps finds the argument from silence not unhandy as a support for what he is sure simply must have been the situation. There is no mention, he somewhat ponderously remarks, that Jesus was ever sick, that when a baby he cried, that he had "excretory functions." It is surely not surprising that we have no mention that his father Joseph "betrothed him." This was so obvious a must for a pious Jewish father—and Joseph was obviously that, for Matthew assures us that he was a "just man," that is, "faithful to Jewish standards"—that it was simply taken for granted by those who first framed the Christian story. So must we.

So Phipps develops his case under right snappy chapter headings: "Tackling a Taboo Question," "Sexual Attitudes in Ancient Judaism," "The Sexuality of Jesus," "Traditional Arguments for Jesus' Celibacy," "Paul and Sexual Relations," "Sexual Attitudes in Second-Century Christianity," "Sexual Attitudes in Early Orthodoxy," "Sexual Attitudes in

Roman Catholicism," and "The Significance of the Question." This last emphasis is very significant for Phipps, who deplores the wave of celibacy which swept in from the non-Jewish ascetic world with its "'No Thyself' imperative" (p. 54), and which lamentably has persisted and spoiled many of those in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. The book draws to a close with the prophecy:

Within the next few decades the law of priestly celibacy will probably be eliminated, and Christians will look back on the papal denial of marriage in the same way as we now look on the denial of freedom to minorities in bondage by ancient Pharaohs or by modern racists. (p. 194).

Since many people still seek to model their lives "in his steps," it is very important to realize that Jesus was married and, thus, is a compelling example, even a sponsor, for all his followers, clergy and lay alike, so to do and be. There are many other points which I could report, or vigorous passages which I could quote, but the space, extended by a generous editor for the notice of these four different but significant books has, perhaps fortunately, run out.



A Mine of Information

Index to Festschriften in Jewish Studies. Compiled and edited by CHARLES BERLIN. Harvard College Library and KTAV Publishing Co. New York, 1971. 320 pp. \$35.00.

Reviewed by ROBERT GORDIS

A SCHOLAR'S life is not necessarily an unhappy one, but it does tend to be solitary and somewhat isolated from the masses of men. To achieve a fair competence in any branch of learning and then, hopefully, to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field, requires that the scholar be prepared to "shun delights and live laborious days." When he finally publishes the result of his researches, he discovers that the corpus of his readers is limited and that the circle of those who agree with his conclusions is even more so, if only because his colleagues tend to justify the wry definition of a "professor" as "one who thinks otherwise."

One of the few special joys open

to a scholar after years of labor in the vineyard is to receive the homage of a *Festschrift* or *Jubilee Volume*, a collection of papers in his honor by scholars and students on the occasion of an important anniversary in his life and career. Unfortunately, even this wreath of laurels has its thorns. Because the contributors to such volumes represent a broad spectrum of interest, any particular paper may escape the attention of specialists in that area. *Festschriften*, therefore, have been described rather unkindly, but not altogether unfairly, as "the graveyard of scholarship." Cynics have been known to point out that for this reason scholars will often contribute relatively minor products of their research to *Festschriften*, reserving more important works for other media of publication. This observation is, undoubtedly, a canard. Every important *Jubilee Volume* contains significant and sometimes major contributions to scholarship. The problem is how to make them accessible to workers in the field.

The solution is obvious, though not easy—to prepare comprehensive indices of the contents of *Festschriften*.

In the field of Jewish studies, Jacob R. Marcus and Albert Bilgray published the pioneering work, *An Index to Jewish Festschriften*, issued by Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, in 1937, which classified the contents of 53 such volumes which had appeared up to that time. More limited in its coverage of Jewish studies, yet highly valuable nevertheless, is Dorothy Rounds' *Articles on Antiquity in Festschriften*, published by the Harvard University Press in 1962, which includes, among other humanistic disciplines, the ancient Near East and the Old Testament.

Obviously, in the 35 years since Marcus-Bilgray, many new *Festschriften* have appeared, with contributions in Hebrew, Yiddish, English, German, French and other languages. There has been, therefore, the need of supplementing Marcus-Bilgray and Rounds. This has now been done in exemplary fashion by Charles Berlin of the Hebrew Division of the Harvard College Library. He has prepared a superb index of 243 *Festschriften* not included in these earlier works. No less than 6,700 articles are listed. The interesting "Introduction" to the book is followed by a list of the *Festschriften* indexed (pages I–XL). The "Index of Authors," occupying 118 pages, offers impressive testimony of scholarly creativity in all branches of Jewish studies in our day. The major portion of the volume, (pages 119–319) is occupied by an "Index of Subjects," a difficult but useful achievement of the highest order. Each article has been listed under two headings, on the average. As a result, a worker interested in any particular subject will find under the given heading a conspectus of

all material bearing on the theme published in this vast conglomerate of *Festschriften*. The subject headings included are sufficiently general to give a broad view of publications in the field and yet specific enough to be useful to the scholar and student.

This bibliography of *Festschriften* is an indispensable tool for all working in any field of Jewish studies. If theological terms were permissible in this context, it might be said that the work performs an act of redemption for the rich scholarly material it indexes and an act of salvation for the scholar, the student, and the interested general reader.

Speaking *pro domo*, this reviewer was pleased to note that the Bible and its various sub-headings occupy no less than 25 closely printed pages in the Index of Subjects. Evidently not all Jewish scholars regard the Bible as outside their domain; that Bible is a "goyische subject," as the late, great Max L. Margolis was wont to remark ironically, is a position originally fostered by Christian dogmatics. It was then maintained during the nineteenth century by the practitioners of *Jüdische Wissenschaft* who concentrated on post-Biblical literature. It is now emerging again in some Jewish circles as part of a well-meant, though mistaken, effort to construe "authentic" Judaism exclusively in Talmudic and Medieval terms. Fortunately, the land of Israel, where Biblical literature, history and archaeology are the very breath of life for the people, constitutes a triumphant rebuttal of such narrowness of vision.

It is far from unimportant to note that the volume is beautifully and clearly printed. This statement applies as well to the hundreds of Hebrew titles listed in the indices.

•

The Jewish Year in Art and Anthology—A Retrospective Survey

Review by RACHEL WISCHNITZER

IN contrast to the *Mahzor*—the synagogue liturgy for the year's cycle—the *Siddur*—the daily order of prayers—and the *Haggadah*—the home liturgy for Passover—the *Sefer Minhagim* was a guide for rituals and customs, rather than a devotional book. Today, that handbook of religious observances is a source of information and enjoyment. For people whose ties are loosened to their own background, it enhances their feeling of Jewish identity. In the period after the First World War, when Berlin was a center of revitalized literary, artistic and Zionist activities, Joseph Budko and Arno Nadel, a graphic artist and a composer-painter, both popular on the Jewish cultural scene, produced *Das Jahr des Juden* (1920), a cycle of expressionist designs evocative of the holidays. Enrico Glicenstein, who had been in Berlin about that time, and who lived in the United States after 1928, conceived drawings on the same theme which, with "prose and verse" by Alexander Dushkin, an educator not particularly noted as a poet, were published by the Chicago art devotee, L. M. Stein, under the title, *The Tree of Life* (1933). Stein was sponsor and financial backer of the enterprises of a group of artists: Todros Geller, who taught art at the College of Jewish Studies, Raymond Katz, who painted synagogue murals, Emil Armin and others. They exhibited at the American Jewish Art Club and congregated at the Jewish People's Institute. (I met the Chicago group as a guest lecturer there in the 1940s.)

Art seems to have become such an important ingredient in the pro-

duction of books on religious observances that Moshe Davis and Victor Ratner illustrated their holiday cycle, *The Birthday of the World* (1959), with Chagall's etchings which, though not topically related to the content, contributed what may be called the Chagall-esque mood.

Besides the holiday books with emphasis on design and format for pictorial effect, the 1930s produced a handbook for practical use with no illustrations, Hayyim Schauss' *The Jewish Festivals*, from their beginnings to our day (1938). This translation of his *Dos Yom Tov Buch* (1933) is now also available as a paperback (1968).

The end of German Jewry was marked by two small, but valuable works. The scholarly, *Der Sabbat*, by Moritz Zobel, appeared in Berlin in 1935, and Elieser Ehrmann's *Purim* as late as in 1937. The latter bore the imprint of the *Rechtsvertretung der Juden in Deutschland*, the only Jewish organization still authorized by the Nazis. The 62-page pamphlet—price 25 pfennig—offered source material from Bible, Talmud, Midrash and the Shulhan Arukh, an excerpt from Schudt's *Merckwürdigkeiten* on the Frankfurt Ghetto, reminiscences by Shmaryahu Levin, stories by Mendele Mocher Sforim, Sholem Aleichem, and Peretz. It also included folklore, quirks and quips, a piece on Purim in Tel Aviv in 1935, Purim songs, and a note on illustrated Esther scrolls by Karl Schwarz, formerly director of the Jewish Museum, and, since 1933, curator of the Museum in Tel Aviv.

The Hanukkah Anthology by Emily Solis-Cohen (1937) was brought out under more favorable auspices. A publication of the Jewish Publication Society in Philadelphia, it inaugurated a series of studies on holiday observances of which the *Yom Kippur Anthology*

by Philip Goodman, recently issued, is the sixth volume.

Miss Solis-Cohen, a poet, translator from the Hebrew, and social worker in Philadelphia, conceived of Hanukkah which, traditionally, had been regarded as a lesser holiday, but which had gained considerably in significance owing to the Jewish sport movement and Zionism, as an inspiration for the young. The anthology contains not only references from the ancient sources and examples from modern literature, but an act from Longfellow's *Judah Maccabaeus*, a play by herself on the Maccabees, another by Samuel Pitkin, some poems, and librettoes for ballets of candles representing the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah. The illustrated chapters on Hanukkah in art and music—the first by the late Paul Romanoff, the second by Abraham Binder—have become permanent features of the JPS anthologies, as are suggestions for programming. The introductory chapters, by Milton Steinberg, on Judaism and Hellenism, and Solomon Grayzel's on the origin of Hanukkah and the various aspects of its symbolism put the festival in historical perspective.

The time gap between the Hanukkah volume of 1937 and the *Sabbath Anthology* by Abraham E. Millgram in 1944/5 was filled with history: Fascism, Nazism, the Spanish Civil War, the destruction of the Jews of Europe. Refugee art historians began to contribute to American art historical teaching and writing. Erwin Panofsky published illustrations of a 15th century Hebrew book of rituals of Italian provenance in the *Baltimore Journal of the Walters Art Gallery* (1941). Another lavishly illuminated 15th century Hebrew ritual from Italy, Rothschild Manuscript 24, now at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, became known from

partial publications of its miniatures. Replacing the handwritten and handpainted compendia, a printed *Minhagim*, with woodcuts, appeared on the market in a number of editions. There was some confusion as to the place and time of the origin of this delightfully illustrated manual of Jewish ritual. In his *A Jewish Iconography*, (London, 1954), Alfred Rubens maintained that the edition of Dyhernfurth, Germany, 1692, was the earliest. The woodcuts, he held, were copies from the *Philologus Hebraeo-Mixtus* by Johan Leusden (Utrecht, 1663). In my chapter on art in the *Sabbath Anthology* of 1944/5, I had included a woodcut from the Sulzbach *Seder Tefilot*, (c. 1670), which was a much better version of the same design in the Dyhernfurth *Minhagim* of 1692. Obviously, it had been taken from an earlier *Minhagim* edition. Further search led to the discovery, in Judah Joffe's Judaica collection, of the *Minhagim* printed in Venice at the di Gara press in 1593. As mentioned by its author, Shimon Levi Gunzburg, it was *fil hibsher den di ershten sinen gevesen*, and, he adds: "one would notice this when reading." He did not refer to the pictures. The first edition of 1590 was not illustrated. I recorded my finding about the priority of the Venice *Minhagim* woodcuts over those in Leusden's *Philologus Hebraeo-Mixtus* in my chapter on art in Philip Goodman's *Purim Anthology* (1949).

Besides the Joffe copy there are two copies of the *Minhagim* (1593) in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, and the Royal Library in Copenhagen lists one in the 1952 catalogue. These data had, apparently, escaped Alfred Rubens. With the provenance and date of the woodcuts established, the development of the illustrated books on Jewish ceremonies appears in a different

light than it does in Rubens' presentation. Leusden was the borrower. Actually, he had taken only eight pictures out of twenty six in the *Minhagim*, not counting the duplicates and the zodiac pictures showing the occupations of the months in the *Minhagim*.

Following the taste of the time, Leusden replaced the woodcuts with engravings in his second Utrecht edition of the *Philologus Hebraeo-Mixtus* (1682). These were reused in the Leyden edition of 1699 as well as later. Different in style, the engravings, by van den Aevele, are basically expanded versions of the primitive woodcuts. Leusden may have obtained his copy of the *Minhagim* through the Sefardi publisher, Joseph Athias, in Amsterdam, who had published his *Biblia Hebraica* in 1660.

The impact of the *Minhagim* book, with its descriptions and comments on Jewish rituals, can be followed up through the 17th and 18th century books on Jewish religious ceremonies. Buxtorf acknowledged his indebtedness to "the Jews' own minhagim" in his *Synagoga Judaica*. The explanation, found in the *Minhagim*, that to woman was assigned the duty of lighting the Sabbath light as a redemption for Eve's sin of "extinguishing the light of the world," found in the *Minhagim*, was taken over by both Buxtorf and Leo da Modena. The reeditions of the *Minhagim* and the *Philologus Hebraeo-Mixtus* compelled the commentators to provide their books on Jewish ceremonies with illustrations. The first editions of Buxtorf's *Synagoga Judaica* (1603) and Leo da Modena's *Historia de' Riti Hebraici* (1637) had no illustrations. Those of the second half of the 17th century, not to speak of later editions, are illustrated. The 18th century works by Christiani, Calmet, Picart, Kirchner, and Bo-

denschatz offer picturesque genre scenes portraying ceremonies in synagogue and home. The *Minhagim* itself was reissued in Amsterdam in 1723 and 1728. Picart's, Kirchner's and Bodenschatz' books, in particular, were popularised by the American *Jewish Encyclopedia* and became welcome pictorial evidence in support of studies on Jewish cultural history, architecture, and books on religious observances. We cite, among other engravings, Picart's Yom Kippur scene in the *Yom Kippur Anthology* in order to correct an old mistake perpetuated in its caption. It reads: "Yom Kippur in a Synagogue in Germany." The caption in the French edition of the *Cérémonies . . . religieuses* . . . refers to "les juifs allemands." In the English edition of 1733, the German Jews became "Jews in Germany." In Picart's work, the Ashkenazim in Holland are called German Jews. The synagogue represented in the etching shows a gallery supported on columns, a form introduced in synagogue buildings in Amsterdam. There were no synagogue buildings of this type in Germany. Joseph Gutmann, who wrote the art chapter in Philip Goodman's *Yom Kippur Anthology*, was evidently not shown the pictures for final revision.

Another most prolific source of illustrations were medieval illuminated manuscripts. For my chapter in Goodman's *Passover Anthology* (1961) I used pictures from Sefardic and Ashkenazic Passover Haggadah manuscripts. Joseph Gutmann made ample use of medieval mahzor illustrations in Goodman's *Rosh Hashanah* (1970) and *Yom Kippur* (1971) anthologies for which he wrote the art chapters. For the *Marriage Anthology* by Philip and Hanna Goodman (1965) Gutmann had at his disposal the rich collections of 17th and 18th century *ketubot*. It may be assumed

that the rituals accompanying the other events from cradle to grave, and those of the lesser feasts and fasts which all belong to the *Minhagim* cycle will follow, to complete the JPS project.

I do not consider myself fully competent to evaluate the content of the anthologies under discussion. As it seems to me, every aspect of the religious rituals has been examined in these books. If omissions will be noted, they will have to be attributed to the silence of the sources. I have always found that the sources are not clear about the time when the woman emerged at the seder. Some readers will particularly value the sections devoted to the ancient and medieval sources. Most helpful are the references to the divisions in the liturgy in which the Scriptural readings are inserted. The book of Jonah read at Yom Kippur reveals an age-long attitude. A new dimension was added in the *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* books with the inclusion of voices of protest. We hear Elie Wiesel say, in *God the Accused*: "This day, I had ceased to plead. I was no longer capable of lamentation." The setting is a concentration camp. The camp in Auschwitz was the place where he meditated about "the day without forgiveness." Levi Shalit, another survivor, recalls Kol Nidre in the Dachau Concentration camp. In Israel, the Kibbutzim, which Rabbi Goodman had occasion to observe, were molding the holidays according to their own life style.

In the holiday volumes, Hanukkah (1937), Sabbath (1944), Purim (1949), and Passover (1961), edited by Solomon Grayzel, there are introductory chapters setting the festivals in their historical backgrounds. They were contributed by Grayzel himself, Abraham Millgram, Harry Orlinsky, and Solomon

Zeitlin. The two last volumes, *Rosh Hashanah* (1970) and *Yom Kippur* (1971) edited by Chaim Potok enframe the penitential period and form a conceptual whole. There is no introduction to this unit. I suppose, though I may be wrong, that Rabbi Goodman was reluctant to raise the problem of guilt and atonement that is charged with so much bitterness and sorrow, for this would have been the theme of the introductory chapter. He has gone as far as he felt he could in including in his anthologies the tense, but restrained, accounts of survivors of the concentration camps.

RACHEL WISCHNITZER is professor emeritus of art at Stern College, Yeshiva University.

•

A New View of History

The Structure of Jewish History: A Radical New Interpretation. By ELLIS RIVKIN. Charles Scribner's Sons. New York, 1971. 256 pp.

Reviewed by MARC LEE RAPHAEL

PROFESSOR Ellis Rivkin has spent close to a quarter of a century attempting to make Jewish history intelligible. He has now expanded his earlier studies on the Pharisees, and on other periods of Jewish history, into a full-length book: *The Structure of Jewish History*. This book is unquestionably the most profound one-volume history of the Jews ever published, and offers, as well, the most radical and exciting philosophy of Jewish history since Nachman Krochmal produced his *Moreh* more than a century ago.

For Professor Rivkin, Jewish history (and any history, as well,) is the successive unfolding of struc-

tures, with the old one dissolving in the very process of creating the new one. Hence, in the Biblical epoch, the successive phases—patriarchal, monarchical-prophetic, and Levitical—culminate in the theocratic—the Aaronide revolution, which though organically linked to prior and subsequent phases, has its own distinctive configuration. Power—enormous power—was concentrated in the hands of the priesthood, and their promulgation of a priestly centered document—the Pentateuch—underwrote their authority. Standing Wellhausen on his head, Professor Rivkin substitutes a “power hypothesis” for a literary one and reaches this highly original conclusion.

This theocratic phase yielded to Pharasaism—the Pharasaic revolution—and injected into history a radical ingredient: a system of personal salvation which assured immortality in the world to come and tied this salvation to a single, father God. While one might wish for closer documentation here (we now know, for example, that those “tenacious supporters of the literal interpretation of the Pentateuch,” the Sadducees, had an Oral Law too; cf. *Tosefta Yoma* 1:8), the masterful weaving of Josephus, the Mishnah, and the Gospels amplifies Rivkin’s earlier radical writings on the Pharisees.

And since history, for Professor Rivkin, is preservative and accumulative, an idea which proves viable persists in its being and is worked through from every possible angle by subsequent structures. Thus, the ideas set in motion by Pharisaism, not only penetrated into Judaism, Christianity and Islam, not only “proliferated into vast structures of power,” but were not challenged in principle until the emergence of the modern world of capitalism, nationalism, science and reason. Every structure is novel, but Rivkin clear-

ly sees the greatest uniqueness and innovation in this structure.

Historical evolution—and Professor Rivkin’s scheme of history is highly evolutionary—is anything but linear, for it is both positive and negative; in fact, one almost guarantees the other—so that turbulence and disasters occur virtually on the eve of the most momentous developments in Jewish history. The chapters on medieval and early modern Jewish history reveal that the phenomena do sustain the conclusion that the Jew’s fate is the most accurate barometer of the state of general society.

But the best, and most controversial of all, is saved for last. (Lest we miss the “creative innovations” Professor Rivkin provides in abundance, he points them out with phrases such as “I have broken new ground” and “in what I believe to be a highly novel way.”) The history of the Jews in modern times, e.g., since the Marrano entrepreneurial capitalists of the sixteenth century, provides the evidence for the direct correlation between capitalistic growth and Jewish emancipation, between capitalistic stress and strain and the rise of anti-Semitism. And the movement towards autonomous, non-coercive, nation states—or “global capitalism”—promises fulfillment for the role of Judaism and the Jews, as well as redemption for all mankind.

Quoting secretaries of state and presidents more often than modern Jewish heroes, and the New York Times more than Jewish literary sources, Professor Rivkin has subtly revealed more insight into the twentieth century context of Jewish life than any other Jewish author this reviewer has encountered. The last chapters, dealing with global capitalism, Auschwitz, Israel and other recent events, have whet my appetite for a fuller study of

this subject alone. For if Rivkin is correct, virtually every historian of twentieth century western society is wrong.

In a 248 page survey of all of Jewish history, some oversimplifications must occur. Fortunately, these are most abundant in peripheral areas—such as summing up the causes of the Revolution of 1830 in France in one sentence. Although rejecting simplistic economic interpretations while insisting on the ultimate importance of the economic impulse, the key word in the interpretation of modern Jewish history remains vaguely defined. If “capitalism” is a “developmental economic system that is driven by the lure of profit” (p. xxix), and if the American Civil War was a war between “planter capitalism” and the Northern industrial capitalism and Western free farming (p. 219), then capitalism loses all meaning. If “planter capitalism” is accurate for describing the Southern economy, then are we not confronted by a capitalistic society that impeded the development of every normal feature of capitalism—a society which represented the antithesis of capitalism? And does not “planter capitalism” ignore capitalism as a social system and focus merely on typically capitalistic economic practices?

Despite occasional vagueness and generalizing, this interpretation is not one bit less than its sub-title asserts, and much more revolutionary than even its author claims. The most readable Jewish history ever, it just may also be the best.

MARC LEE RAPHAEL is professor in Jewish history at Ohio State University.

There Are Jews Everywhere

The Bene Israel of Bombay—A Study of a Jewish Community. By SCHIFRA STRIZOWER. Schocken Books, New York. 1971. 190 pp. \$8.00.

Reviewed by EZEKIEL N. MUSLEAH

THE Jew of the age which produced Hitler and the State of Israel has, almost necessarily, a powerful sense of the unity of Jewish destiny. This, in turn, has led him to search for principles of Jewish unity, and has forced into the limelight a question which has been dormant for hundreds of years but which the Halakhah (Jewish law) was never ambivalent about: Who is a Jew? Formidable problems stand in the way of researchers, and their task is all the more redoubtable if the chosen venue tends to combine fact with apparent fiction.

All this is reflected in Schifra Strizower's book. The sincerity of the search, the profundity of the tensions and contradictions, and the well-written product of her findings, carry excellent credentials. One may cavil mildly with the mixture of diary, direct reporting, and historical survey, but she has blended her original and secondary materials into a beautiful coat of many colors. On the level of historiography, as an art form, which portrays a community's struggling, creative soul as a presently apprehended reality, the interested reader might ask for more. But this, perhaps, is too much to demand, especially in a field in which so little more is available.

According to their tradition, the Bene Israel are descendants of an ancient Hebrew group, perhaps the Ten Tribes of Israel, who were shipwrecked off the west coast of India sometime before the Christian Era, and the majority of whom came to live in the western Indian city of Bombay. Having been cut

off from the centers of Jewry, they were virtually "lost" until the eighteenth century, when they were brought back gradually into the mainstream of Judaism.

Against the values of the dreary centuries from which they emerged, the Bene Israel have truly heroic stature. Up to a time, they would refer to themselves, and were referred to by their Indian neighbors, as a caste of oilmen, because of their original occupation of oil pressers. (Caste, of course, was the main characteristic of the Indian social system.) They dressed in Indian garb and their mother tongue was Marathi, one of the languages of western India. Their names were Indian, though they did have Biblical ones, too. Their physical appearance resembled that of their Indian neighbors, a quality, says the author, rightly common to Jews among whichever people they dwell. They did have, according to an earlier historian, distinctive beliefs and practices, such as unusual rituals in the observance of feasts and fasts. These the reader might have been looking for, but the author is unable to supply them, due to the unwillingness of the Bene Israel to discuss them, "since it was held that however enamoured of the community I appeared to be, I was after all a member of that section of Jewry which seemed forever to be examining Bene Israel on their knowledge of Judaism and awarding them bad marks for it." Dr. Strizower gives them no more than deserved tribute. She sketches their path from the earliest evidence of their separate identity, critically examining their traditions, through the time when a substantial number of them began to emigrate to Israel. The degree of Jewish piety and religious discipline and the overall texture of the Jewish life of the Bene Israel are given as precise a description

as one who did field work among them for over a year could give.

Born of parents "for whom the study and practice of Judaism was the purpose of life" and whose destiny was smothered in European death camps, Dr. Strizower has a deep sense of identity with Orthodox Judaism. Indeed, one gets the impression that she was attracted to research "a Jewish community in a more hospitable country" partially, at any rate, because, far from the main centers of Jewry, she found an exotic Jewish community that was apparently the underdog in the exacerbated tensions between themselves and the later Jewish immigrants from Baghdad, Iraq. There is never any doubt where her sympathies lie. She speaks with great compassion of the Bene Israel, she feels for them, she is slow to comment caustically about them. While she does not dodge their weaknesses, their frailties, their mistakes, she does so with compassionate understanding.

In fairness to the Baghdadis, she does suggest that they "played an important part in the nineteenth century religious revival of the Bene Israel—and not only because, being familiar with the minutiae of Jewish religious practices, they provided the Bene Israel with an example of Jewish Orthodoxy." However, the Baghdadis and the Bene Israel regarded one another with a mutual distaste which is painful to contemplate even in retrospect.

It should be pointed out that this is no exceptional case. When, for instance, German Jews who settled in America were followed by co-religionists from European countries, suspicion and distrust ensued. In Bombay, an added cause whipped up animosities—the allegation that the Bene Israel were not pure Jews. And when they were accepted by the Jewish Agency, as Jews, for

immigration to Israel, old prejudices were revived by the Israeli Rabbinate. The emigres were charged with having been unfamiliar with Jewish law relating to divorce and levirate, saddling them with doubtful marital status and placing limitations on their marriage to non-Bene Israel.

Dr. Strizower is committed to a different view. She theorizes that "the Bene Israel were never as isolated from Jewry as their historical memories imply," though she is not sure of the extent of their technical knowledge concerning those vital areas. In any case, she considers this possible deficiency irrelevant on two grounds: First, Bene Israel women, in their modesty, have been averse "to live with another husband after they have once been married," and hence did not need to practice divorce. Second, "Widow marriage was frowned upon." There is no knowing, however, if even these were, in fact, universal proclivities in the Bene Israel way of life.

This volume, dealing as it does with the Bene Israel of Bombay, would consider the Bene Israel living in Calcutta, twelve hundred miles across the northern portion of the Indian peninsula, outside its purview. Interestingly enough, though, the Jewish community of Calcutta, ninety-five percent of which was Baghdadi, excelled in good relations with the fifty or so Bene Israel who lived among them. As far back as 1843, the Bene Israel observed Jewish ritual, attended synagogue, were called to the Torah, and received Jewish instruction, on a par with Baghdadis. Inter-community marriage, however, was not common. The Bene Israel were buried in the same cemetery as their fellow Jews, but in an exclusive section. Considering that the principle of separate burial was extended even to the Bagh-

dadi priestly element (the Kohen), the Cochinis and the Jews from western countries, discrimination against one segment of the community was hardly the criterion. Rather, it was a desire to preserve burial contiguity on the basis of individual families.

A summary and evaluation of Dr. Strizower's volume is in continual danger of running not much shorter than the book itself; I have not referred to interesting chapters on inner communal dissensions, economics and institutions, leadership and family life, and the possible influence of Christian missionaries. The bibliography, notes and index are themselves significant contributions to historiography. Indeed, the serious defect of this book is that it is too short for all that it has to say. Dr. Strizower has not given herself enough space to work out the full implication of all she is saying.

The excellently written foreword by a member of the Bene Israel, B. H. Israel, is marred only by its disheartening content. This indigent Indian Jewish community, like the rest of Indian Jewry, is fast diminishing—disintegration by emigration and assimilation. It is sad, not only because of the gradual loss of distinctiveness in the "melting-pot" environment of Israel, but also for the fact that India is one country where Jews could live "with pride and honor and without any need for self-consciousness or protective withdrawal" into themselves. It is, therefore, as a testament to this spirit and the wonder of the Bene Israel saga that Dr. Strizower's book has a classic quality that should whet her readers' appetite to learn more about the Bene Israel, and to follow their doings in the Land from which they claim to have come—the Land of Israel.

The Jewish heart has been far

more perceptive in fathoming Jewish destiny in our time than the Jewish mind. This fact must make us hopeful that, with sufficient intellectual patience and integrity, we may also succeed in formulating the adequate philosophy of Jewish unity we all desire. This volume takes a large step in that direction.

EZEKIEL N. MUSLEAH served as Rabbi of his native community in Calcutta and is now at Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia.

•

How Do Men Live Together?

The Tenants. By BERNARD MALAMUD. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. New York, 1971. 230 pp. \$6.95.

Reviewed by FOSTER HIRSCH

The Tenants could have been written only by Bernard Malamud. The novel's symbolically charged confrontation between Jew and alien, its parade of Jewish suffering and Jewish guilt, its atmosphere of unresolved lives set against the bleak isolation of an unyielding New York winter, all clearly sport the trademarks of Malamud's craftsmanship. More specifically, *The Tenants* is a reworking of *The Assistant*, Malamud's most striking achievement. In that fine and terrible novel, Malamud palpably creates the claustrophobic inferno inhabited by Morris Bober, the ever-vigilant grocer, his thrift-obsessed wife Ida, their heading-toward-spinsterhood daughter Helen. The grocer's confinement within his crumbling market becomes an image of the unlive life. Into this microcosm of Jewish suffering—Morris is a self-confirmed loser, he expects the worst, and he always seems to get it—enters a gentile, who comes first to rob the grocer and who remains to atone for his crime by working selflessly to save Morris from financial ruin. The de-

veloping relationship between the guilt-wracked gentile and the hapless Jewish family—Frank's courtship and crazed seduction of the daughter, his growing respect and even love for the grocer—represents the triumph of instinct over acquired prejudice; Frank and Morris are keenly aware of their differences, but gradually, tentatively, they learn to accept each other—more, they learn to accept responsibility for each other.

The Tenants has precisely the same structure, but its confrontation between Jew and outsider reaches too deliberately for symbolic impact, and the novel, therefore, lacks the naturalistic detail which enriches *The Assistant*. The characters, the abandoned tenement setting, and the minimal plot of *The Tenants* are so obviously employed in the service of Malamud's "universal" theme, that they lack density on a purely realistic level. In *The Assistant*, the "large" theme is comfortably contained within the narrative framework—we respond to characters and situation in an immediate way which is altogether denied us in the more cerebral environment of this latest novel.

Part of the uncongenial self-consciousness is traceable to Malamud's substitution of two writers for the more homely, less verbally sophisticated grocer and his assistant. Malamud's characters are always deeply implicated in their professions; Morris Bober is frequently called "the grocer" just as here Harry Lesser (a quintessential Malamud name) is "the writer." Because the details of a character's profession are important to Malamud, we are treated to Lesser's persistent speculations on the joys and hazards of writing just as, in *The Assistant*, there is much space devoted to the daily ritual of operating a dilapidated neighborhood

market. But the routine of a grocer provides fresher terrain for literature than the tortured theorizing of a writer; in its preoccupation with the theories of both a Jewish and a black writer, *The Tenants* belongs to that familiar and rather tiresome genre of novels about novelists.

Harry Lesser is a self-destructive Jew who remains blocked for ten years on an unfinishable novel about love. It becomes clear that Harry's unresolved book is intimately connected with his unresolved life, and we are made conscious of the irony of this isolated man trying to write about a subject so foreign to his experience. In Pirandello fashion, Malamud suggests that art and life are deeply interfused: when Lesser learns to love, then he will be able to find the ending for his novel.

Willie Spearmint, Lesser's neighbor in the otherwise vacated tenement, also uses his writing as a defense against living. Willie is an embittered black who wants to capture his anger in burning prose, but he begins to suspect that writing is an evasion, that he might more effectively even the score against the white man by direct political action.

Like the grocer and his assistant, Harry and Willie, fully conscious of their antithetical cultures, circle each other suspiciously. Flexing their muscles, they are prepared for combat. They engage in a ritualistic pattern of approach and avoidance; a tentative trust is established, only to be demolished, and then tenuously reasserted. As if destined to enact the elemental hostility between white man and black, the two writers "take" from each other: Lesser takes Willie's vacillating white girl; Willie, in retaliation, destroys Lesser's manuscript. Willie regards Lesser's theft of his girl as a symbol of Jewish

exploitation of the black man, Lesser regards Willie's destruction of his manuscript as symbolic of the black's manic rage and of the Jew's eternal role of scapegoat.

The Jew as defenseless victim, as devious expropriator; the black as savage destroyer, as expropriated victim; the Jew as sexually inhibited intellectual; the black as sexually liberated, as both sexually aggressive and yet easily available, dominatable: the novel is an agglomeration of racial stereotypes. It's true that exactly such stereotyping has supplied the bricks and mortar of practically all of Malamud's characters; but when he is working at full power, the Jewish stereotyping is a source of strength, a means, surprisingly, of quickening caricature into shimmering life. The two writers of *The Tenants* are accurately observed—Malamud is particularly successful with Willie's racy black idiom—but they remain half-created. We know them finally no more completely than we know *Levenspiel*, Harry's put-upon landlord. With his tortured Yiddish syntax, his unending series of family woes, his expecting the worst and his almost wishfulfilling rush toward self-defeat, his taking life hard, *Levenspiel* is a veritable compendium of Malamud's stock-in-trade Jew. *Levenspiel* is in the novel for comic flavoring; it doesn't really matter that he is only half-perceived by the author and by us. But it *does* matter that Harry and Willie remain rooted on the same level of caricature and racial cliché. Like Harry Lesser himself, Malamud, finally, has not whipped his recalcitrant material into life-giving form.

But there *are* rewards here, primarily stylistic rather than thematic (and that style and theme are so easily separable suggests the inorganic nature of Malamud's conception). The novel is visually striking

ing: images of a befouled, ominously vacant tenement; the inhospitable chill of a besmudged New York winter street; piquant and flowery psychedelic visions. In Lesser's mind we are treated to fleeting visions, ironic fantasies, the novel's reality turned upside-down, inside-out:

Now that the imagination is imagining Lesser imagines it done, the long labor concluded at last. Relief, calm, mornings in bed for a month. Dawn on the sea, rose lighting the restless waves touching an island waking, breathing the fresh breath of its trees, flowers, bayberry bushes, seashells. Ah, the once more sensuous smells of land surrounded by the womanly sea. Birds rise from the shore, wheel, fly above the ragged, mast-like palms into the lucent sky. Gulls mewling, sudden storms of blackbirds shrilling over the violet water. Ah, this live earth, this sceptered isle on a silver sea, this Thirty-first Street and Third Avenue. This forsaken house. This happy unhappy Lesser having to write.

Throughout the novel there are judicious and refreshing images and choices of words, beautifully sculpted passages. Many of the encounters between the two writers are shaped with satisfying allusiveness. Malamud's "writing" is often lovely and strong, his verbal decoration is richly experimental. Like his protagonist, Malamud is clearly thinking carefully about his craft, about the uses of language and structure. But the novel's exploratory form exists as something peculiarly detachable from the confrontation of Jew and black. As a stylistic exercise, *The Tenants* is quite a show; as a statement of racial tensions or, beyond that, of human relations, it is disappointingly ordinary.

FOSTER HIRSCH teaches English at Brooklyn College and at the New School.

Religion and Man's Humanization

The Religion of Ethical Nationhood. By MORDECAI M. KAPLAN. The Macmillan Co., New York, N.Y. 1970. 205 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by WILLIAM E. KAUFMAN

THE thought of Mordecai M. Kaplan can be understood as the organic development of a conceptual framework articulating the purpose of Jewish existence in the modern world. Central to that framework are Kaplan's pragmatic method and his belief in the possibility of human self-fulfillment through group religion. These integral elements of his philosophy are cogently expounded in novel and creative ways in *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood*.

In this work, Kaplan develops his particular conception of the pragmatic method as functionalism. The basis of this method is the evaluation of ideas in terms of their effects and consequences for human life. His reason for utilizing this approach lies in "understanding reality in order to improve it." (p. 4) Since Kaplan's fundamental concern is the improvement of human life, the purpose of this book is to formulate a conception of religion which will best foster that aim.

Throughout his career, Kaplan has regarded religion as a manifestation of the collective consciousness of a group. The uniqueness of the Jewish religion, he contends, lies in its collective *conscience* or sense of responsibility for mankind: "The Israelite nation alone through its spokesman the prophets conceived of mutual responsibility as extending beyond the nation to which one belonged. They envisaged all nations as learning to experience a sense of reciprocal responsibility." (p. 34) Applying this view of ethical nationhood to the

present, Kaplan sees the hope for world peace as contingent upon the willingness of nations to impose ethical limitations on their sovereignty. The argument of the book is that the authentic function of religion today should be to save mankind by fostering ethical nationhood.

Professor Kaplan is quite cognizant of the fact that religion has often impeded rather than advanced human progress. Hence, he realizes that his notion of ethical nationhood entails the humanization of religion: "Before religion can humanize man, man must humanize religion." (p. 84) Arguing against an authoritarian religion based on blind faith, he advocates a humanistic one rooted in wisdom.

Kaplan's conception of wisdom is the most novel idea advanced in this book: it is an attempt to understand the problem of faith and reason in a new light. Whereas reason deals with fact, "wisdom refers to the experience and scale of values which answer man's vital needs." (p. 48) Foremost among these values are responsibility, honesty, and creativity. Kaplan maintains that the reality of God can be experienced as the creative process in the cosmos functioning in man through such values. This places the burden of religion squarely upon man and gives rise to Kaplan's new conception of faith: "Mature wisdom or authentic religion *depends upon faith in man*. The reality of God can be experienced only when mankind acts in a way that makes for creative survival." (pp. 48, 49)

In order to understand Kaplan's definition of wisdom, it is imperative to note that he maintains not only a process conception of God but, also, the notion that man is in process. It is his belief that the nature of man, far from being a fin-

ished product, is still in the making. And his hope for man's future creative metamorphosis is rooted in his pragmatic method: "*That man is destined to rise in the scale of being may be only a hypothesis, but if that hypothesis illumines his past, if it orients him to the present and offers guidance for the future, it should be explored.*" (p. 113)

The central argument of this book might appear to be circular. Kaplan maintains that in order for religion to humanize man, man must humanize religion. But the possibility of man humanizing religion seems to presuppose that man has already reached a plateau of development where he can create a religion of ethical nationhood.

The solution to the problem involves a dialectical view of man in relation to religion. Referring to Hegel's theory of the concrete universal, Kaplan writes: "Universals must be so formulated as to indicate that aspect of things which emphasizes their straining to transcend the condition in which they happen to be. That straining, or *nisus*, is their dialectic." (p. 100) Kaplan's view of religion as ethical nationhood can, therefore, be regarded as a concrete universal which he formulates on the basis of his belief in the possibility of man's self-transcendence. Man, therefore, can envisage an ideal whose actualization entails transcendence of his present condition. Hence, man and religion are dialectically inter-related: a man conceives of a religious ideal which, in turn, shapes his development. The synthesis of the dialectic is Kaplan's vision of individual and collective fulfillment through ethical nationhood. And its presupposition is Kaplan's dynamic view of man.

The problem of religious naturalism, heretofore, has been the ambiguity of descriptive and nor-

mative categories as applied to human nature. Purporting to base their theories on human nature, naturalists have often surreptitiously introduced views of what man ought to be into what are, ostensibly, factual descriptions of man. The virtue of Kaplan's new approach is that the dimension of value is clearly recognized and that "human nature" itself becomes a normative concept. Factually, all we know is that man is in process, at least in a cultural sense. Belief in the *creative* metamorphosis of man through evolution requires faith. And Kaplan's reason for advancing this dynamic is pragmatic: it is his firm belief that entertaining the possibility of man's creative evolution as a hypothesis can, itself, help to foster its actualization.

Kaplan's hope for man's future is an anodyne to the pessimistic philosophies of our time. And it is a salutary hypothesis by virtue of the responsibility which it places on man to further his own creative self-metamorphosis. Nevertheless, since the future is unknown, Kaplan's prognosis for man is predicated, not only on his experience of God as a creative process, but, also, on his belief that this creative process will function in the future evolution of man.

The distinctive character of the book lies in Kaplan's unceasing effort to replace blind faith with wisdom and inquiry. But his hypothesis of the creative transformation of human nature through evolution presupposes his belief that the chaos of nature is "forever being vanquished by creativity, which is God as infinite goodness." (p. 51) Therefore, pursuing the logic of Kaplan's thought, one is led to the conclusion that belief in man must supplement, but cannot supplant, belief in God.

Thus, *The Religion of Ethical Nationhood* provides the most re-

cent example of the unfolding of Mordecai M. Kaplan's generative intellect, manifested in his ideal of religion as a humanizing factor in man's development.

WILLIAM E. KAUFMAN, *Rabbi of Congregation Bnai Israel of Woonsocket, R.I., received his Ph.D. in philosophy from Boston University.*

•

The New Left Looks at the Jews

The New Left and the Jews. Ed. by MORDECAI CHERTOFF. Pitman, New York, 1971. 322 pp. \$6.50.

The Bush is Burning! Radical Judaism Faces the Pharaohs of the Modern Superstate. By ARTHUR I. WASKOW. Macmillan, New York, 1971. 177 pp. \$5.95.

Reviewed by BILL NOVAK

THERE was a time, not so very long ago, when American social and political life maintained at least a minimal measure of consistency and predictability. For all their turmoil, the 1960's were at least comprehensible, that is, until 1968. For when that year began it was fairly clear that before it ended Lyndon Johnson would have easily won another term, and in the process would have probably made the necessary political bargains with such symbolic figures as, for instance, Robert Kennedy, or Martin Luther King. But events took their own strange course, and the years which followed have proved, if more stable, no less predictable. For American Jews, 1968 was a turning point for yet another reason: Israel.

A generation which had witnessed in such rapid succession the European Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel was somewhat unsure of the latter event for at least two

decades. Unlike their sons and daughters who had never been alive when there was no Jewish state, these men and women were understandably uneasy about Israel's existence. And together with their children, they experienced the mystifying events of June, 1967—events which, in effect, changed their own consciousness dramatically. For here, at last, as the bumper stickers would proclaim shortly, ISRAEL IS REAL. And no sooner had Israel's enemies been convincingly and dramatically crushed on the battlefield than American Jews began to discover an enemy of a different kind: The New Left.

Nor was this apprehension about the New Left completely groundless, at least not in the beginning. For one thing, the New Politics Convention in Chicago had adopted a position toward Israel which was surprisingly rigid and hardly sympathetic to the Jewish state. In addition, many intellectuals and academics were motivated by the Six-Day War to re-examine—many for the first time—their complex and often ambivalent feelings toward Israel. And for many others, it was simply the facile but appealing mystique of the “third world,” a most unusual phrase which can apparently describe citizens of a fascist state manipulated by an imperialist power and at the same time exclude citizens of a people's state, admittedly supported by another imperialist power.

But things have changed. True, even today the American left is not exactly lining up to buy Israeli bonds. At the same time, however, it no longer makes any sense to talk in sweeping, conspiratorial terms about an alleged New Left plot against Israel. For one thing, although charges of conspiracy are rarely characterized by their reliance on facts (something Jews sure-

ly know), in actual fact there is no New Left existing at this time in America. What used to be understood by that term is now so fragmented and weak a coalition that the phrase itself is almost without meaning. And what is even more important, as we shall see, is that what remains of the New Left is confused, divided, and altogether removed from holding a single position in regard to Israel and the Arabs.

As the imagined threat has dissipated, however, the measures taken against it have, ironically, increased. So we now have counter-propaganda, counter-publications, and a variety of efforts to counter an almost negligible phenomenon. We are constantly being advised that unity must be effected in a time of crisis, and that anti-Zionism is tantamount to anti-Semitism, a bit of dangerous nonsense which merely serves to distort rather than clarify the current situation.

In view of all this, a volume such as *The New Left and the Jews* is curiously dated. The title, incidentally, is misleading, as the book's main concern has to do with Israel far more than Jews. And despite allegations to the contrary, and the obvious overlap, these are *not* identical subjects. The book grew out of a conference held under the auspices of the American Histadrut (which employs Mr. Chertoff) two years ago. Seven of the papers read at that conference are reprinted here, including those of Robert Alter, Leonard Fein, Saadia Gelb, Nathan Glazer, Tom Kahn, Nathan Rotenstreich and . . . Noam Chomsky. In addition, three essays were commissioned especially for the book, while the remaining chapters are reprinted essays by Irving Howe, Amos Kenan, Walter Laquer, Seymour Lipset, Robert Nisbet, and Marie

Syrkin. These latter essays, while not without merit, shed little light on the subject under discussion, and one wonders what is gained by their inclusion in this volume.

For the most part, those articles which do pertain to the subject under discussion are general warnings that the Left only "appears" to be hospitable to Jews, and that its members who are themselves Jewish might someday awaken with a rude shock. This is a tiresome theme, but not without its relevance: certainly world and Jewish history are on the side of these cautious advisers.

But there is one essay in this collection which deviates sharply from the rest, and which merits our closest attention. If Noam Chomsky is correct, and I believe that he is, then his argument effectively undermines the whole thrust and intention of this book. Chomsky has been grossly villified, and his views greatly distorted by certain elements of American Jewry, but in these times he no longer seems so far away from the mainstream. When he first started talking about Palestinian rights, a number of years ago, he was dismissed as anti-Zionist, or, that favorite epithet (now usually reserved for Philip Roth and Arthur Waskow)—a Jewish self-hater. In any event, this is how he begins his contribution to the Chertoff anthology:

... I think that the topic of this symposium is somewhat misconceived. There is, I will suggest, very little to say about attitudes of the New Left to Israel. However, there is a great deal to say about how these attitudes have been depicted and, in my opinion, grossly distorted. ... I believe that in part the reasons for this distortion have more to do with domestic American problems than with the Israel crisis itself.

Chomsky, one of the few people who might well be considered somewhat of an expert on the New Left, then proceeds to go through the various publications that are somehow linked to that movement, such as *Ramparts*, *Liberation*, and *New Left Notes*, demonstrating how, in fact, very little attention has been accorded to the Middle East, and how, of those articles which have touched on the subject, very few could be thought of as hostile to Israel. The implication here—and I think it must be made as well by people whose positions within the Jewish community are more respected than Chomsky's fairly tenuous links—is that there appear to be forces within Jewish life who find it advisable to behave as though the threat were imminent and dangerous. Chomsky concludes:

There is no New Left doctrine on the Middle East. Rather, there is confusion, unhappiness, some—though limited—debate, and a great deal of sympathy, often at a rather intuitive and barely articulated level, for socialist elements within the Jewish and Arab national movements, combined with a general fear that national movements can do enormous harm if they subordinate the struggle for social reconstruction to purely national aims.

"If there were no New Left," a friend of mine remarked in a moment of deep cynicism, "American Jewry would have had to invent it." He is probably more right than he realizes. I do not wish, of course, to imply that Jews have no enemies on the Left. They exist on the Left, on the Right, and everywhere in between. But continually to cry "wolf" where there is no immediate danger is not only bad politics, but, far worse, is ultimately counter-productive to any cause.

* * *

In the past year or two, Arthur Waskow has come to replace Noam Chomsky in the minds of many who see in him a traitor to the Jewish people. This accusation is not only wrong, but slanderous as well, even when engaged in by such respectable institutions as *Commentary Magazine*.^{*} Waskow, frequently called an anti-Zionist (which is itself no crime), is actually a self-proclaimed Diasporist, that is, one who believes that Jewish life in Israel is not necessarily *the* center of the Jewish people, but *one* center, one of the three main strongholds of Jews in the world, all of whom, he hopes, will eventually realize that statehood is a curse, not a blessing.

Early in his rather recent involvement in Judaism, Waskow visited Israel, and, as a result, he records:

I began to make a distinction between "Israel" and "Zion." "Israel" seemed to be a state like other states, which ought to be treated with as much respect as Sweden or Chile—but no more; a state responsible to an Israeli people, which was entitled to self-determination as were any people, but not entitled to suppress the self-determination of other peoples. "Zion" seemed a much more elusive concept. I kept wanting to apply it to two different things: the Place, as yet unachieved, from which the Prophets tell us the teachings of the Lord will go forth to all the world; and the communities of committed Jews living directly in relation with Eretz Yisrael . . . the land itself. And for the first time I found myself wanting to understand some relation between "the Diaspora," the disper-

sion of Jews around the world, and "Zion," in this new sense of the committed Jewish communities in Eretz Yisrael.

Aside from his efforts to re-define Jewish commitment to Israel, Waskow's main involvements have been in the American political arena. This, after all, is his home ground, and long before his Jewish interests developed he was a successful and respected historian and political scientist, and, perhaps more important, one of very few social thinkers involved in discussing scenarios for the future who, unlike, say, Herman Kahn, had a personal commitment in trying to make it more humane as well.

The book is part of a dying genre—testimony. It is the story of a remarkable and highly gifted young man who only recently discovered, or re-discovered, his own Jewishness. The book begins with Waskow's gradual recognition that politics, in its most narrow, tactical sense, was too limited an approach to life. Nor did he come to this realization in a vacuum, but rather out of the context of the late 1960's, a period which brought so many American Jews closer to their Jewish roots than they had ever expected to be:

When I started looking carefully at the "religious question," it became clear that something remarkable was happening among young Americans. Religion had become not only an arena of insurgency, but a *form* of insurgency. . . . People like Allen Ginsberg were trying to exorcise the Pentagon as well as besiege it. People like the Bread and Puppet Theater were handing home-baked bread around between the actors and the audience. People like an Episcopal Bishop were holding Mass among bleeding, crying students at Grant Park during the Chicago upheaval. People like Dan Berrigan were celebrating a new

^{*}See the articles in the February 1971 issue, and the letters published in June of that year. [But see also Arthur Waskow's own paper published in *JUDAISM*, Fall 1971. R.G.]

religious ceemony: burning the records of the Selective Service System. Precisely on the Left, where for a century the automatic dogma had been that religion was the opiate of the people, religion had been turned from a narcotic to an awakener. My own inward inexperience during the spring of 1968 were not idiosyncratic; I was sharing them with scores of thousands of other Americans. Including young Jews.

Waskow goes on to describe how he has been able to make use of Jewish tradition in this symbolic, political sense. Those who have charged that Waskow has come to Judaism through radical politics are perfectly correct. He is often accused of coming to Judaism late, as if that were some sort of sin, or, worse, of "using" Judaism, and the tradition to support his political beliefs, as though being a Jew were somehow separate from the business of living. The charge of "using" the tradition is a serious one, but it is not one that can rightfully be made simply because a person's political views differ from those of his opponents. Besides, Waskow is utterly serious, and what he has managed to learn about Judaism in the past several years has been considerable.

This is not to suggest that all his applications of Jewish symbols have been equally convincing. The Freedom Seder, one of the earliest, is perhaps the weakest, and has been duly criticized elsewhere (and with all the vitriolic fire of a medieval exorcism). But, at his best,

Waskow is a creative innovator trying to understand and appreciate Jewish law and symbols in the spirit of our age. Kashrut, for example, might be seen as including a prohibition against food grown with pollutant chemicals, or with oppressed labor; Shabbat might be thought of as man's first general strike. More recently, Waskow has spearheaded a project whereby the Jewish people in America would declare itself at peace with the people of Vietnam, and would partially atone for its country's defoliation—explicitly outlawed in Jewish tradition even in time of war—by a tree planting campaign to reforest Vietnam.

In a review of this book in the *New York Times*, Waskow was called a Jewish Berrigan. For several days I was disturbed, even somewhat embarrassed by this appellation. The Berrigans, after all, are learned Catholics, scholars in their own right, with years of commitment to the religious life. Waskow, at first glance, is a novice (and not in the Christian sense), even a bit of a bungler. But there are times, and this is such a time, when the last guests to arrive at the party gain a certain immediate grasp of the situation at hand which often eludes those who came earlier, now slightly drunk, many of them, and periodically bored by the whole business.

BILL NOVAK is editor of *Response*. He is a member of *Havurat Shalom Community*, and a graduate student at *Brandeis University*.

Pro and Con Pius XII

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM:

It would seem that in any judgment on the policies of the Holy See, its own idea of its role and the possibilities open to it should be an important consideration. In the case of an institution such as the Vatican, this role is shaped by history and long traditions. . .

With regard to the Jews, the Vatican kept intervening confidentially everywhere to help Jews escape. In countries where any hope existed of favorable results, it protested diplomatically against the deportations. All this is admitted by many of Pius XII's detractors, who complain *not* that he didn't *do* anything but that he didn't *say* anything. . . Pius XII did make allusion to those suffering by reason of race (Christmas 1942 and June 1943), but this is not considered sufficient by his critics of the Sixties. . .

But Mr. Eckardt is not after Pius XII alone. His real object of attack is the Catholic Church. . . Mr. Eckardt's goal is to set up a dichotomy in which men must make "their choice between justice for men and traditional Christianity." This sounds like the peroration of a Reformation Day sermon of the nineteenth century. . .

The Catholic bishops of the United States have called Catholics to a fraternal encounter with Jews. Hopefully, we will work together, Catholics and Jews, for the cause of truth and justice.

GEORGE P. GRAHAM

Rockville Center, N.Y.

TO THE EDITOR OF JUDAISM

George P. Graham's allegation that I use my review of the Falconi volume in order to attack Pope Pius XII and the Catholic Church is libelous. I do no such thing. (The same applies to his misrepresentation of the facts respecting the excommunication of Hitler.) I suggest that Graham read the review again, but this time with objectivity and fairmindedness. Gra-

ham completely fails (or refuses) to deal with the moral and historical issues posed by the documentation provided by the author of the book.

Graham employs Falconi's reputedly private concept of the moral obligations of the papacy as an *ad hominem* cloak to hide the single question brought to the fore by the author: how the Christian religion could ever have been turned into an instrument of complicity in the murder of human beings. In consequence, the dialectic is never joined (by Graham) between the Holy See's "own idea of its role and the possibilities open to it" and the norms of the Gospel. The horror of Graham's protest is that he is thereby blinded to any acknowledgment of how the Pope's "refusal to speak out played into the hands of evil" (Falconi). Perhaps the ultimate diabolism is that Graham's fear of the loss of the Pope's moral leadership works to guarantee that very loss. Such is the fate of those who fancy that they can ignore or betray Gospel norms.

Now we have Pacelli's culpability sustained and compounded by Graham's, and all this, as is prevalent in such cases, in the name of "understanding" and "friendly relations," together with a familiar resort to the charitable testimony of one or another Jewish dignitary. Unfortunately for Graham, Christian self-defensiveness must only defeat the noble purposes listed. Indeed, Graham's effort to obscure the reasons behind the Pope's silence only serves to call attention to the terrible deeds involved. While I cannot speak for the Jewish community (much less the Christian community), I doubt that the Jewish people will be prepared to sell themselves to Graham's apologetic and polemic version of "truth and justice." Happily, other Christians, Catholic and Protestants, are following instead the spiritual and moral path of penitence for the crimes of Christendom.

Bethlehem, Pa.

A. ROY ECKARDT

JUDAISM

**THE EDITORS OF JUDAISM
and**

The American Jewish Congress

take pleasure in announcing the publication of a

**TWENTY YEAR
CUMULATIVE INDEX
FOR JUDAISM
1952—1971**

Over 1200 papers are included

A: INDEX OF AUTHORS

B: SUBJECT INDEX OF ARTICLES

C: INDEX OF REVIEWS

**An indispensable tool for scholars, students and general
readers in the field of Jewish religion, philosophy and ethics.**

\$2.00 per copy

Gratis to 1972 subscribers

\$2.25

SPRING 1972